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ABSTRACT

This guide examines organized labor's views on adult literacy. It also describes several union-sponsored workplace education programs and suggests how a union can plan and operate a worker-centered literacy program. The book is organized in three parts. The first part examines workplace literacy in four chapters that cover the following: the changing workplace, unions' stake in education and literacy, literacy in the workplace today, and unions' worker-centered approach to workplace literacy. The second part, which makes up most of the book, contains two chapters that explain how to design a worker-centered program. Steps described include the following: laying the groundwork, identifying members' needs and goals, negotiating funding, defining the union role, developing links with the educational community, outlining a plan of services, designing the worker-centered classroom, encouraging members to participate, and keeping the program on track. The second chapter of this section suggests ways educational services can be offered to union members if the union is not able to operate its own program. The final section (appendixes) lists members of the technical resource group involved in developing the guide, outside funding resources, 56 books and articles, and labor organizations whose programs are mentioned in the guide. (KC)

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Worker-Centered Learning:

A Union Guide to Workplace Literacy

by
Anthony R. Sarmiento
Ann Kay

AFL-CIO Human Resources Development Institute

1990

Are You Interested in Receiving Updates to This Guide?

HRDI and the AFL-CIO Education Department will be producing other materials to assist unions involved in workplace literacy, education, and training. If you're interested, we'd like to put you on our mailing list.

In exchange, all we ask is that you answer the following questions about your program, and return the form to us. We also welcome any additional information about your program or ideas about this guide.

Tell us about yourself:

Your name and title: ______________________________
Labor organization: ______________________________
Name of your program: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________
City: ______________________ State: ______ Zip: ________
Telephone number with area code: ______________________

Tell us about your program:

1. How long has your program been operating?

   ☐ no program yet
   ☐ 1 to 2 years
   ☐ 3 to 5 years
   ☐ 6 to 10 years
   ☐ more than 10 years

2. About how many have participated in your program so far?

   ☐ fewer than 50
   ☐ 50 to 100
   ☐ 100 to 500
   ☐ more than 500
   ☐ more than 1,000

(form continued on back)

3. Which of the following describes the purpose of your program? (*Check all that apply.*)

   ☐ preparation for different jobs or promotions
   ☐ specific occupational training or certification
   ☐ connection to an apprenticeship program
   ☐ GED or high school diploma completion
   ☐ college preparation
   ☐ English as a Second Language program
   ☐ to serve workers' family members
   ☐ to serve laid-off members
   ☐ other (*please describe*) ____________________

4. Who funds your program? (*Check all that apply.*)

   ☐ funded through the collective bargaining agreement
   ☐ the employer only
   ☐ the union only
   ☐ government (federal, state, or local)
   ☐ private foundation
   ☐ other

5. How would you describe the union's role in the program? (*Check all that apply.*)

   ☐ The union directs and operates the program.
   ☐ The union co-sponsors the program with signatory employers.
   ☐ The union is involved in hiring staff and teachers.
   ☐ Classes are held in the union hall.
   ☐ The union recruits members to participate in the program.
   ☐ Other

6. Which educational institutions are involved in your program? (*Check all that apply.*)

   ☐ none
   ☐ public university or college
   ☐ private university or college
   ☐ community college
   ☐ state or local department of education
   ☐ vocational-technical school
   ☐ other

When you have completed this form, tear it out and send it to us at:

AFL-CIO Human Resources Development Institute
Attention: Workplace Literacy
815 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Foreword

In preparing *Worker-Centered Learning: A Union Guide to Workplace Literacy*, the Human Resources Development Institute (HRDI) had the privilege of working with many people, both inside and outside of the labor movement.

We're especially appreciative of the support that the leadership of the AFL-CIO has lent to HRDI's basic skills efforts, which led to our developing this guide. President Lane Kirkland and Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Donahue have maintained an active interest in our work in this area. The AFL-CIO Education Department and the George Meany Center for Labor Studies have encouraged and supported us throughout this project. We are also grateful for the assistance that others at the AFL-CIO gave us, especially the Department of Economic Research.

Anthony R. Sarmiento, as Assistant Director of HRDI, conceived the idea for this publication and guided it to completion. He has been instrumental in shaping HRDI's approach to workplace literacy, as presented here, and will be continuing his efforts in this area in his new position as Assistant Director of the AFL-CIO Education Department.

Ann Kay, Senior Associate with Ruttenberg, Kilgallon & Associates, had primary responsibility for writing the guide. She worked closely with our staff in its preparation, helping to shape our vision of the guide.

We also want to recognize the contributions of present and former HRDI staff who carried out our workplace literacy project: Melva Meacham, Charles Hodell, Carmell Anderson, and Emily Silver.

Finally, this guide owes a special debt to the trade unionists who served on the project's Technical Resource Group (listed in Appendix A, "HRDI's Technical Resource Group"). It is their collective wisdom – based on years of serving the literacy needs of their members – that we have attempted to capture here. In particular, we are grateful to Katherine Schrier, administrator of the AFSCME District Council 37 Education Fund, for her ideas and advice.

In preparing this guide, we've all felt an urgency to seize the new opportunities presented by the current national interest in workplace literacy. We will consider our efforts rewarded if we can help others in the labor movement to make full use of these opportunities to serve the needs of the workers they represent. We also hope that this guide advances the national discussion of workplace literacy toward a better understanding of workers' needs.

Alan Kistler
President, HRDI

Michael G. McMillan
Executive Director, HRDI

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Why You Should Read This Guide

Unions are some of the best experts on workplace literacy. Few organizations can match their track record for helping workers improve their literacy skills. Unions' experience — brought to you in this guidebook — can help you establish or strengthen a workplace literacy program for your members.

A local union president learns that new equipment will be installed over the next few months. Her members will need computer training, and some may also have to brush up on their reading and math skills. . . .

The president of a state AFL-CIO is asked to serve on the governor's adult literacy coalition. At the first meeting, he hears much discussion of an "epidemic" of worker illiteracy which is said to be threatening the state's economic growth. . . .

A central labor council is asked to write a letter of support for a workplace literacy proposal to be run by a local school. . . .

A new occupational certification law will require many of the workers represented by a local union to pass a test in order to keep their jobs. . . .

Laid-off members of a local union are having trouble finding new jobs. . . .

Local union officers are asked to encourage their members to participate in a "literacy audit" of union workers at a company worksite. . . .

The Purpose of This Guide

Are these scenarios familiar? As a union leader, you almost certainly recognize them. Like others throughout the labor movement, you probably face a growing variety of situations that demand action on workplace literacy issues.

As a union leader, you also know that being literate is more than simply knowing the ABCs. A literate citizen is one who commands the reading, writing, figuring, and reasoning skills needed to meet personal life goals and enjoy the full benefits of today's society. As such, adult literacy education is a true union issue.

We at HRDI have prepared this guide for you — the trade union leader who recognizes that worker education is one of the labor movement's real bread-and-butter issues. We hope you will use it to make workplace literacy part of your union's agenda.

What This Guide Will Give You

In this guide, we give you guidelines for analyzing your own situation and for developing a strategy for workplace literacy that will help meet your members' education and training needs.

What This Guide Contains

- **Part I, "Understanding Workplace Literacy,"** (Chapters 1 through 4) contains information that will help you understand the issues – so you can make workplace literacy part of your union's agenda and can explain the issues to your members.
- **Part II, "Designing a Worker-Centered Program,"** (Chapters 5 and 6) gives you nine specific action steps for designing your own program and other ideas for meeting your members' needs.
- **Part III, "Getting More Information,"** (Appendices A, B, C, and D) tells you where to get more information.

We warn you about potential hazards that stem from poorly designed and executed programs so that you can avoid harm to your members and your union.

In addition, we give you examples of how and why unions have been involved in education and training programs for decades. We want to demonstrate why workplace literacy isn't a new issue at all, but one that organized labor has long embraced as a way of serving union members, strengthening the union movement, and meeting the needs of their employers as well.

Getting your union involved in workplace literacy isn't as hard as you'd think. The climate today – among educators, the government, employers, schools, and community groups – is supportive of new workplace literacy initiatives. And as the representative of the learners who would be served, your union can shape and influence the programs created for your members – whether they be education, training, or literacy programs, or some combination. Your role may be substantial if you choose to operate a program or you may opt for another role that requires fewer resources. This guide will help you identify the key considerations in making this decision.

What This Guide WON'T Do

Don't expect to find a quick fix in this guide, a one-size-fits-all solution that will eradicate illiteracy. There's no such thing.

Also, don't look here for the ideal program for your members. You can't get that from national experts or by copying what's worked for others. It would be like trying to find the ideal collective bargaining agreement.

Just as the best contract takes into account what has worked elsewhere, it must also be tailored to fit the specific and constantly changing needs of your members and the employer. The same is true of education, training, and literacy programs.

This guide has its limitations. Although we've tried to make it broadly useful, the labor movement is so diverse and its members' needs are so varied that we couldn't give all of those needs the attention they deserve. For example, we don't deal with the specialized needs of the small fraction of our members who have what are often described as learning disabilities, or with the education needs of our members' children who are in school or have dropped out.

What We Mean by Workplace Literacy

Workplace literacy is more than just knowing how to read. It's also more than having the narrow skills for a specific job. When we use the term *literacy*, we include the full array of basic skills that enable an individual to "use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." This is the definition of literacy that the National Assessment of Educational Progress uses in its research on literacy.

Workers who lack those basic skills are not necessarily illiterate. They may even function at a high level of technical skill in their jobs. But they lack the breadth of skills to function at their full potential in today's complex world.

Workplace literacy programs can reflect the efforts of labor and management to address the broad literacy needs of workers – their basic academic skills, their job-related skills, and their life skills. Developing a program that reconciles the learning goals of workers and their employer is a process in which union representatives play a critical part. That negotiating process will build on the structured dialogue between employer and union that is established in collective bargaining and other labor-management forums.

For Further Information

HRDI or your international union can give you further information about workplace literacy issues and can put you in touch with other experienced labor organizations that have operated workplace learning programs. If you're interested, contact the national office of HRDI:

AFL-CIO Human Resources
Development Institute
815 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 638-3912

The rest is up to you. You wouldn't let someone outside your union negotiate your contract; why let someone else negotiate and plan your members' education and training program? There's too much at stake not to get involved. Besides, don't your members expect you to look after their education and training interests? No one is in a better position to do so than your union.

Part I. Understanding Workplace Literacy

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1. Agenda for a Changing Workplace

In today's workplaces, change is often unexpected, unavoidable, and threatening. Planning for change is one way unions can help control the impact on their members. In developing their agenda for a changing workplace, many unions look to their established labor-management relationships. Working together as equals, unions and employers have been able to plan for change and reduce or eliminate its harmful effects. A worker education strategy that includes workplace literacy is frequently an important part of that agenda for change.

Unions Respond to Change in the Workplace

Finding solutions to changing workplace needs has always been a priority for the American labor movement. In a constantly changing work environment, unions have sought from their earliest days to harness the benefits of change for their members. Over the years, unions led their members through the transition from an economy based on small craft shops to the complex industrial base of the twentieth century. They saw to it that their members got the education and training they needed for changing jobs, and they exercised the leadership of this highly skilled workforce to improve living standards and working conditions.

Today the pace of change is accelerating. Unions are constantly reviewing and revising their plans for serving their members in a changing work environment. As always, education and training can be a key part of unions' broad agenda for assisting members in responding to change.

The collective bargaining relationships that unions have established with their employers enable workers and employers to come together to discuss today's new workplace needs. These relationships – and other established labor-management structures – provide an appropriate forum for responding to the complex workplace changes in today's economy.

As AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland described the trend several years ago in remarks to an AFL-CIO Training and Education Conference:

> "Unions will be going to the bargaining table to negotiate learning programs and learning time, along with work time."

The joint problem-solving mechanism of collective bargaining gives unions an equal voice with employers in addressing workplace concerns. With joint problem-solving, unions contribute as equal partners with employers in finding answers to their shared problems. By bringing workers' views to the table – through their union – the process supports the principle of democracy in the workplace.

Our Broad Strategy for Change Is Threefold

Any planning for change in the workplace needs to recognize at least three factors that affect how work gets done in any industry.

1. *equipment* — the tools, materials, and technology that are made available to help accomplish work; the physical environment of the job.
2. *work processes* — the way work is structured and jobs are designed to support the accomplishment of desired tasks.
3. *worker skills* — the education or training that will enable workers to perform their jobs effectively.

Changes in any one of these interconnected factors has an impact on the others. Take new technology as an example. A strategy for introducing high-tech tools can't ignore any of the three work factors. For each factor, the strategy should seek to fit the new work situation to workers' needs -- not simply to help workers adapt to the new tools. For instance, is the new equipment designed so workers can perform their jobs comfortably, safely, and effectively? Will job responsibilities, and therefore job classifications, need to be redrawn? Will workers have access to the training they want to fully understand and use the new equipment?

The foundation for worker skills are the basic skills we refer to as workplace literacy. Your union's activities in workplace literacy can effectively address your members' changing skill needs. In this way, your literacy efforts can support your broader strategy for change in the workplace. That's why literacy programs are a key item on our larger agenda for workplace change.

> *As a union negotiator I know that our wage scale and standard of living are dependent on . . . modernization. . . . What is not so evident is the need for an allocation of investment capital not just to capital stock, but, most importantly, to human capital; i.e., human resources.*
>
> *—Lynn R. Williams, President*
> *United Steelworkers of America*
> *Testimony to House Ways and*
> *Means Committee*
> *October 25, 1989*

Preparing for Change Is a Joint Concern

Employers and unions each have vital interests that bring them to the table to plan for change in the workplace. Employers want a productive, profitable operation (or, in the public sector, a cost-effective one). Unions want to serve workers' needs. Ideally, both goals can be met when both sides anticipate change and prepare for it together.

Unions can help employers plan their response to new factors in the workplace. How will new services or product lines affect the equipment that workers use in their jobs? How might jobs be redesigned to make the best use of workers' existing skills? What kinds of training are needed to update employees' skills?

To bring their long-term organizational plans and strategies to life, employers need to enlist the help of their workers, through their unions. An employer who's serious about planning for change must share its long-term goals with the union. When the union has early access to this information, workers can contribute to the planning process and can help develop a response to change that both sides can live with.

For employers, involving union representation in the planning process is good management. It can minimize disruption and productivity losses by involving the affected workers through their union.

For your union, an agenda for change can directly support your fundamental mission of service to your members. Unions are using the forum of labor-management relations to protect

Negotiated Responses to Change

Unions have devised creative solutions jointly with management to address members' needs in a changing workplace:

- new technology

  Advance notice of new equipment or technology is now required under many union contracts. With advance notice, unions can work with management to cushion the impact of the new equipment on members' jobs.

- job content

  A number of unions have established the right to negotiate not only new job classifications but also the qualifications required for those jobs. When unions take the lead on these issues, job content can be determined on the basis of their members' first-hand knowledge of workplace needs.

- advancement opportunity

  As work processes change, some unions have established new lines of promotion for their members. These career ladders open new avenues for advancement with existing employers. Equally important is posting job openings so members are fully informed of advancement opportunities.

their members' employment rights in the face of a changing work environment. These protections extend across all three aspects of work – the physical equipment, the content of workers' jobs, and the skills they use in their work.

In the chapters that follow, we'll focus on how unions address the critical issue of their members' skills. American labor unions have always had education and training programs as part of their broad agenda. From the days of the early craft guilds, when one generation of workers trained the next, unions have understood that maintaining a highly trained workforce is a source of labor's strength. Today labor unions are exploring new avenues for education and training, in keeping with the fast pace of change in our work sites.

This Agenda Needs Support from Public Policy

Our labor-management initiatives alone won't provide the relief our members seek in a changing work environment. These efforts can be successful only when public policies support the needs of America's workers in a changing economy. Those policies include trade, tax, and capital investment – investment in both capital equipment and "human capital."

Developing our nation's human resources will require a strong public commitment to education and training. Privately-funded programs in the workplace can't replace the publicly funded education and training systems. The two must go hand in hand.

So, while labor's strategy for workplace change will naturally draw on the labor-management mechanisms we've described here, unions have a continuing role to play as advocates of effective public investments as well.

2. Unions' Stake in Education and Literacy

A union-sponsored education or training program that includes literacy can be a key part of your union's broader agenda for responding to change in the workplace. It can add significantly to the lineup of services you offer your members. Because your union represents the interests of the learners (your members), your union is the natural organization to sponsor such a program. You won't want to participate in a poorly designed program, though; your members and the union can lose more than they gain.

Worker Education Promotes Our Broader Objectives

Education and training – including literacy programs – are key ingredients in your union's broad strategy for helping your members deal with changes in the workplace. What's equally true is that education and training help serve your members and strengthen your union.

A union-sponsored education or training program that includes basic literacy skills can help you achieve many of labor's basic workplace objectives:

1. *protecting your members' employment security*

   An example is the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), whose members have faced new drivers' license tests in order to keep their jobs as bus drivers. The tests were mandated under federal legislation setting national standards for commercial driver licenses. The ATU took steps to help its members prepare for the exams. A union-developed study guide and tapes have helped members improve their basic reading and test-taking skills as well as review driving requirements.

2. *increasing your members' job advancement opportunities with their employer*

   The Bakery Workers (at Nabisco) and Machinists (at Boeing) are among the unions that have negotiated new career paths so members can take advantage of job restructuring and related training to advance in their careers.

3. *advancing the safety and health of your members in their workplace*

   Through its asbestos abatement and hazardous waste removal training program, the Laborers Union has enabled members to qualify for new jobs, while protecting the health of its members and the public.

4. *expanding opportunities for quality education*

   The American Federation of Teachers, together with the AFL-CIO and other affiliates, has been a leader in advocating quality education at the primary, secondary, and postsecondary levels.

5. *reaching out to new members*

   Education and career advancement were key issues for District Council 37, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) when the union organized New York City hospital workers in the late 1960s. The result was the establishment of educational benefits for workers covered by AFSCME's collective bargaining agreements with the city. That education program continues as one of the labor movement's largest.

6. *serving members' diverse educational needs*

   Responding to members' interest in educational and self-improvement classes, the Steelworkers created "self-interest classes" for workers at Ohio Steel Tube. The children of union members got their own special classes as part of the wide-ranging joint program that the United Auto Workers have developed with Chrysler in Delaware. Citizenship and English language courses have been among the special classes available to recent immigrants through the Labor Immigrant Assistance Project sponsored by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor.

Unions Should Sponsor These Programs

Certainly literacy programs, as part of a broader education and training effort, can help you further your union's objectives in the ways we've just described. But those programs need to carry your union's imprint. We believe unions should sponsor those programs themselves. Unions are the most appropriate organizations to run learning programs for their members. (See the box, "Why Unions Should Provide Education and Training Themselves," on the next page.)

Even when the program has employer involvement and support, the union is still the best choice to sponsor the program

> *"What the union is doing is great. It's giving every employee the opportunity of bettering themselves."*
>
> *– Teacher's aide enrolled in a union-sponsored college degree program*
>
> ------------------------------
>
> *"I would never in a million years have gone back to school. . . . I owe it all to the union."*
>
> *– Sewage treatment worker enrolled in a GED program sponsored by his union*

Why Unions Should Provide Education and Training Themselves

- Workers go to their union when they need help. Naturally, they look to you for advice and assistance on job training and career advancement matters.
- Your members know the union represents their interests unconditionally. That representation is guaranteed by the contract and law. At the same time, they also know that their employer will always be evaluating them for their job performance and productivity. Your members will be more comfortable in an education or training program that's not identified with their supervisors.
- Workers want their employer to judge them solely by their work performance. Having an education program sponsored only by the employer can confuse that evaluation process.
- You know your members and communicate well with them. Your members know they can talk freely with their union about their educational needs and shortcomings.
- You know their jobs and understand the changes that occur in their worksites.
- You know how to involve learners—your members—in designing the kinds of programs they want and need.
- Your members will be reluctant to participate in a program without their union's endorsement. They trust your judgment.

The union is the one organization that represents the potential learners, and it's uniquely positioned to look after their interests. It's an organization that the workers have elected themselves, and they trust it to make decisions on their behalf. That's why many of the most successful programs are operated by unions on behalf of their members—even programs that receive financial support from employers. Those employers recognize that the union can make the program succeed.

As the sponsor of a program, you have a variety of options as to what your union's role will be. As you'll see in this guide, your options can include hiring your own teachers and operating the program yourself, entering into agreements with local schools or community groups, or participating in joint labor-management programs where the union is an equal partner with the employer. You'll have to decide which approach is most appropriate for your union. But no matter which approach you choose, the union needs to be in a position to plan and oversee the program from start to finish.

Education Isn't Just About Schools

Why is education an issue for the workplace? Why not just improve the schools?

Schools can't handle the vast needs of workers in a changing workplace. First, three quarters of the people who will be working in the year 2000 are already out of school. Most of them are already in the workforce, and it's there that they'll confront their need for further education and training. Unions and employers have a responsibility to reach out and serve adults who are no longer in school.

This doesn't mean that classes must be job-related or that they must be held at work. What it does mean is that the workplace is an ideal place to reach adults who want to continue to add to their skills and knowledge. Unions (and employers) are in a good position to do that.

Second, our existing adult education system isn't prepared to respond to the changing skill needs in the workplace. Adult education is seriously underfunded. As we'll see in Chapter 3, "Literacy in Today's Workplace," adult education programs have the resources to serve only a tiny fraction of the adults who need basic skills assistance. Most adult education courses are oriented to the traditional high school curriculum or to preparation for a high school equivalency degree. But the basic reading, writing, and math skills taught in school are very different from the basic skills workers use on the job, according to several studies. Moreover, many of the workers in search of new skills already have their high school degrees. It's no wonder then that the dropout rate from the traditional adult education programs is extremely high. Workers often don't find what they're looking for. With some exceptions, these programs tend to have little connection to the workplace basic skills that workers seek.

Similarly, volunteer-based literacy programs aren't generally equipped to help workers adapt to changing workplace requirements. Recent visibility in the media has raised expectations about what the volunteer movement can accomplish, and these programs are striving hard to keep pace with that need. Unfortunately, though, they are often overtaxed by a lack of resources and are largely inexperienced with education and training for the workplace.

Programs based in the workplace have another advantage: learners who share similar job experiences support one another. Their group experience reinforces learning. It's also a living model for group problem-solving.

Workplace Literacy Initiatives Are Timely

The heightened public interest in workplace literacy gives a special timeliness to unions' initiatives in worker education. So does the widespread national concern about maintaining a skilled and competitive workforce in a changing economy. The public is now more aware that education and training should be a lifelong process, that we need opportunities to continually update our knowledge and skills. This trend has focused new attention on workers' skills. There's a growing general understanding that education and training programs based in the workplace can help us keep in step with a changing economy and society.

But employers for the most part have been unwilling to take a leadership role in responding to changing skill needs in the workplace. They simply aren't making the necessary investments in worker training and education. The initiative in establishing or expanding these programs must often be assumed by the union if workers' skills are to be kept current.

Recent national attention on workplace literacy puts unions in a stronger position to leverage employer support for new or broader programs. There is a growing public expectation that employers have a responsibility for keeping their workers' skills up to date. The expectation is reinforced by groups such as the federally appointed Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency, which recently added its voice to those advocating greater employer investments in training. Even some prominent employer associations agree. In this climate, employers are likely to be more receptive to education and training initiatives from unions.

Literacy Is No Cure-All, Though

Like some employee assistance programs that appear to be well-intentioned, education and training programs -- and

When to "Just Say No"

Workplace literacy programs can be abused. A badly designed program can harm your members and your union. If an employer advocates a program that doesn't meet your members' needs, just say, "No."

- Don't sign on to a program if you're not a full partner in it. A lesser role for the union means you can't be sure your members' legitimate interests are protected.
- Don't endorse approaches before you've examined their potential impact on your members. You might unknowingly recommend activities that damage their employment rights and opportunities, their self-respect, or their dignity.
- Don't let the content and goals of the program be imposed by others. Most adults reject programs that only teach what someone else says is "good for them." Instead, adults choose programs where they can learn what they themselves wish to learn.

especially literacy programs -- can be the vehicle for policies that run contrary to the best interests of workers and their unions. As a union leader, you'll want to be careful in selecting and recommending the specific approaches that will be used. If the employer attempts to establish a workplace literacy program that doesn't meet your members' needs, why would you give the union's endorsement? Your members will want you to look after their interests. The employer will need to bring the union into the planning process, where you can jointly devise an approach that satisfies your members.

Similarly, guard against unrealistic expectations. Workplace literacy programs are often promoted as a solution to all kinds of workplace problems, from worker safety to productivity. But as we described in the preceding chapter, these programs are effective only as part of a broader labor-management plan to solve those problems together. Merely establishing a workplace literacy program unconnected to the other major needs at the workplace is most likely to cripple the program's effectiveness.

3. Literacy in Today's Workplace

We need to clear up some common misconceptions about literacy in today's workplace. With continual changes in the workplace and the growing complexity of our modern world, workers face demands for new or different skills. As a result, our definition of what it means to be "literate" is both broader and more complex than it used to be. For workers to update their literacy skills in a changing world, education and training must become more available to people of all ages in their workplaces and communities. Unfortunately today, most adults get little opportunity to keep their skills current.

Literacy Reports Are Often Misleading

Workplace literacy has become a national concern. Certainly it is not a new issue, but the pace of change in the modern workplace has spurred a broad nonpartisan interest in the basic skill levels of adult workers. From educators to the media, from union officials to our national leaders, we hear concern about the quality of basic skills among American workers.

The issue certainly deserves serious attention. To workers as individuals, literacy might mean being able to read to one's children, qualify for a higher-paying job, and participate fully in community activities. To workers as citizens and union members, literacy might mean maintaining a robust economy, a strong labor movement, and a sound democracy.

But the literacy issue – especially workplace literacy – tends to be misrepresented in the popular media. News stories frequently describe the lack of basic skills among America's workers, giving the impression that a shockingly large percentage of the workforce can't read the simplest sentences or solve the simplest arithmetic problems. Even more disturbing, we are told that this apparent "epidemic of illiteracy" among workers may be growing – despite billions of dollars reportedly spent by employers to address the problem.

As this chapter describes, the scientific research on literacy reveals a different picture from what we may have seen in the media: the vast majority of American workers *do* know how to read, write, and compute. And they are also aware when their skills are inadequate or becoming obsolete. Most workers are already convinced that upgrading their literacy and technical skills is vital to their own future and to the future of their families, their employers, and the nation.

We are missing the point when we focus the blame for literacy problems on the workers. Instead, we should look more closely at what employers and public policymakers are doing. Do they make available the training and education that today's workers want and need?

Too many employers remain unwilling to commit the resources required to keep up the skills of the workforce. Contrary to popular impressions, only a small percentage of workers receives any type of training or education in the workplace. And when working adults seek to improve their skills through the publicly funded adult education system, they find a limited range of programs already straining to meet the demands of adult learners.

So why should we be surprised that a "skills gap" exists? Most working adults have little opportunity to improve their skills before, during, or after their regular working hours, either in their workplaces or communities.

Defining Literacy Is Not Easy

To appreciate more fully our workplace literacy problems, we need to understand what "literacy" really means. Unfortunately, there's no simple way to define literacy. Moreover, its meaning keeps changing. Today's complex world makes clear that no "scientific" or objective definition of literacy exists. Instead, literacy and literacy standards depend on what skills our society considers necessary or important.

In the United States of 100 years ago, for example, you were considered literate if you could simply sign your name. By that standard, nearly everyone in the U.S. today is literate, as educational experts such as Thomas Sticht have pointed out. As work and society grew more complex, literacy standards were also raised – for example, to require reading skills at the fifth, or eighth, or twelfth grade level.

Today, discussing adult literacy is complicated further because many education researchers believe that it's no longer useful to set literacy standards based on grade or reading levels. These experts argue that any single measure or score is too simple. Literacy encompasses many different kinds of complex skills used in too many different types of situations.

For example, most people recognize that reading, writing, and math represent different skills. But do we also realize that there are different types of reading? The type of reading depends on a number of factors, such as how the printed information is organized (paragraphs, lists, tables) or how it is to be used (to locate a specific piece of information, find a solution to a problem, read for pleasure or general knowledge). Someone may find it easy or difficult to understand and use printed materials, depending on the type of reading involved.

Single literacy measures like grade-level scores also don't take into account a person's background knowledge. For example, a mechanic may score at a high grade-level when reading technical materials that he uses regularly. The same person may have difficulty with "simpler" reading on an unfamiliar subject.

What Literacy Isn't

Misusing the terms "literacy" and "illiteracy" causes a lot of confusion. Here are some of the things literacy is **not**:

- **Literacy isn't an "all or nothing" condition.** Being literate involves many different skills. Individuals are often strong in some of those skills even when they're weak in others. And an individual may perform the same skill at different levels, depending on the specific situation and prior knowledge about the subject.
- **Literacy isn't the same as intelligence or IQ,** which some argue is fixed early in life. Through educational programs, individuals can improve their literacy skills, regardless of age.
- **Literacy isn't the same as grade level.** It's misleading to peg adult literacy to achievement test scores. Paper-and-pencil tests often don't measure the skills adults actually use to function in their jobs and society.

Today, Literacy Includes Many Skills

In keeping with the latest educational research, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) chose this definition of literacy in 1985:

> "Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

NAEP, a research project established by Congress, has proposed a new way of understanding literacy. NAEP finds it useful to recognize three distinct areas of knowledge and skills:

1. *prose literacy* – understanding and using information from texts, such as newspapers, magazines, and books
2. *document literacy* – locating and using information from documents, such as job application forms, bus schedules, maps, tables, and indexes
3. *quantitative literacy* – applying numerical operations to information contained in printed materials, such as checkbooks, menus, order forms, and advertisements

Similarly, the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) has supported a broad definition of literacy that encompasses different groups of skills. In its 1988 report, *Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want*, ASTD asserts that the employers it surveyed want workers to be competent in seven basic skill groups. The breadth of these job-related basic skills underscores that workplace literacy entails far more than the traditional three Rs.

1. *foundation* – knowing how to learn
2. *competence* – reading, writing, and computation
3. *communication* – listening and oral communication
4. *adaptability* – creative thinking and problem-solving
5. *personal management* – self-esteem, goal setting, motivation, and personal and career development
6. *group effectiveness* – interpersonal skills, negotiation, and teamwork
7. *influence* – organizational effectiveness and leadership

What is the relationship among the different skill groups? How is one skill connected to the others? Experts disagree. Just because a worker may fall short of the required competency levels in reading, writing, and computation, many warn against assuming that the same person has inadequate problem-solving or interpersonal skills, or vice-versa.

For example, a worker may be able to speak clearly, thoughtfully, and persuasively after analyzing a job-related problem or task – even to large audiences. But that same person may find it extremely difficult, even impossible, to express the same ideas in writing.

What Literacy Measures Make Sense?

If we embrace definitions of literacy such as those proposed by NAEP or ASTD, we can begin to see how difficult it is to measure the literacy levels of individual workers. Using a single standard or measure to summarize a person's literacy skills is not very useful or meaningful. NAEP, for instance, recommends that at least three measures are necessary, one for each of its three types of literacy: prose, document, and quantitative literacy. NAEP avoids, however, setting a minimum score to separate the "literate" from the "illiterate."

Even using a term like "functionally illiterate" is not very helpful. The ability to use one's literacy skills to perform or function depends on the specific requirements of the situation.

For instance, if a worker has no difficulty reading on the job, but demonstrates inadequate skills writing memos or reports to a supervisor, should that person be considered "functionally" literate or illiterate? What if that same adult who has writing problems on the job is nevertheless able to express ideas clearly and adequately through letters to friends and family? Can we call that person functionally illiterate in writing skills?

The answer depends on several factors, including what the situation requires, who is determining the acceptable level of performance, and how performance is being evaluated. This is what education researchers mean by establishing a "contextual" definition of literacy.

How Widespread Are Literacy Needs?

If it is difficult to classify an individual as literate or illiterate, then how can we generalize about the number of "illiterates" among a specific group of workers – or among all adults in the United States? Only with great caution and strict conditions.

Researchers have a hard time agreeing on the number of illiterate adults in this country. Their estimates range from 4 million to 27 million to 60 million. Like estimates of the number of unemployed or poor people in the nation, the number of illiterate adults depends on what official definitions or standards are used.

But many experts concur that only about 4 million adults truly don't recognize or understand letters, numbers, or simple sentences. The adult illiterates usually portrayed in the media who need to memorize their ABCs represent a tiny minority of the adults who could benefit from improved literacy skills.

Even accepting the conservative estimate of 4 million adults with serious deficiencies in their basic skills, the problem is still a substantial one that deserves national attention, in the view of most experts. Our nation's problem is further multiplied when we add all other adult Americans – from high school dropouts to college graduates – who need to maintain or add to their basic skills in order to meet the increasing literacy requirements of their jobs, families, and society. Although these much larger numbers of adults do not consider themselves to be illiterate, their education needs merit greater national attention and resources.

> *The organized labor movement realizes that education is not an arbitrary thing that automatically ends with a certain year of life, but that it must continue throughout life if the individual is really to live and make progress. . . . [Unions] realize that education is an attitude toward life – an ability to see and understand problems and to utilize information and forces for the best solution of [life's] problems.*
>
> *– Samuel Gompers*
> *First President, American*
> *Federation of Labor*
> *Address to Teachers, 1916*

Many workers and their unions are convinced that Samuel Gompers' observation (see box above) is just as true today as it was three quarters of a century ago. To attain their individual goals and to realize organized labor's vision of a better workplace and society, workers are seeking ways to improve their skills continuously – both their broad literacy skills and their specialized technical skills as well. But to meet these education and training needs, more programs will be needed – at more workplaces as well as in more communities.

Few Employers Offer Enough Training

Today a serious education and training gap exists. We see a conspicuous disparity between the skills employers say they want and the training they provide. It's not appropriate to make the publicly funded schools and training programs assume major responsibility to close this gap – 75% of the next decade's workforce is already out of school and working. Updating the skills of employed workers is largely an employer's obligation. Yet the most recent comprehensive studies show that too few employers offer training and education to their employees. As a result, most workers aren't getting access to the training they want and need.

Only one employee in 10 receives formal training of any kind from his or her employer, according to widely accepted estimates by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). ASTD reports that this training represents a total employer investment of about $30 billion a year. Though the figure may appear substantial, it's only 1.4% of the national payroll – far from enough.

With few exceptions, most employers concentrate their paid training among a managerial "elite." The great majority of workers, those who produce the goods and deliver the services, go without. So states a 1989 report, *The Learning Enterprise*, prepared by the ASTD.

Very little of that employer-provided training is devoted to basic literacy skills. And only one-fourth of all employers are interested in expanding their literacy efforts, according to a 1989 study by the Society of Human Resource Management (formerly the American Society of Personnel Administrators).

The workers who are better educated to start with get most of that employer-provided training, according to the ASTD study. College graduates have a 50% greater probability of getting training on the job than high school graduates. Access to job-related training is even higher for those who've had education beyond the college level. So the less formal education you bring to your job, the less likely your employer will invest in educating or training you.

Without impetus from unions, management's training budget would almost certainly be even lower. Unions are often catalysts, urging employers to invest in training for all employees, not just managers and supervisors. Unions also contribute to education and training programs by negotiating for training trusts and other programs to be funded through collective bargaining agreements. In industries as varied as the building trades, manufacturing, hospitality, health care, communications, and maritime industries, unions are increasingly utilizing these training funds to meet their members' education and training needs.

Unions aren't alone in the view that employers' $30 billion training budget is woefully inadequate. The national Commission on Workforce Quality, for example, recently called on employers to invest more in their workers. The ASTD study, mentioned earlier, urged employers to nearly triple their training investments to at least 4% of payroll. Even this extra investment would make training available to only 30% of all employees.

But unions are playing a critical role in closing our nation's education and training gap. Through the collective bargaining process, they're working to establish a workplace culture that allows and encourages workers to maintain and upgrade their skills. Job security provisions, career ladders and lines of promotion, fair wages and benefits, safe and healthy working environments – all these reinforce the message that an employer truly regards employees as invaluable assets who are difficult to replace.

Public Programs Have Limited Impact

Throughout the years, the American labor movement has demonstrated its strong commitment to publicly funded adult education programs. Still, these adult education programs serve only 1% to 2% of their intended audience, as the Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency reports.

Although some individual programs are excellent, the adult basic education system as a whole is inadequately funded and tends to get low priority among competing educational demands at the state level.

Improving the Public Schools Is Also Vital

Although this guide focuses on workers who are already out of school, the literacy skills of tomorrow's generation of workers are being shaped today by the public schools. The labor movement continues to advocate school system improvements:

- better public financing

  The U.S. lags far behind other industrial countries in its investment in the public school system. A dozen countries spend more for public education than we do as a percentage of gross national product, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a labor-supported research group. Better public education starts with adequate funding.

- more individualized teaching

  Too often our overcrowded public schools resemble understaffed assembly lines where teachers don't have time or resources to solve special learning problems. Our teachers need support in establishing more flexible classroom environments where they can assist students with their individual learning needs.

A few other federal and state programs offer limited basic skills services – such as the vocational education system, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs, and the new Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) employment program for welfare recipients. Those programs generally don't address the needs of working adults, and their budgets, too, are limited.

Volunteer organizations are attempting to supplement these publicly funded programs. As we noted in Chapter 2, "Unions' Stake in Education and Literacy," the volunteer movement is relatively inexperienced in workplace programs, but national literacy groups, such as Literacy Volunteers of America, are moving to define a workplace literacy strategy.

More Public and Private Resources Are Needed

More than half of the adults who enroll in traditional adult education programs drop out of those programs before they achieve their learning goals. For those who stay in the programs, too often improvements are small. As we noted earlier, these problems are symptoms of a system that doesn't answer the needs of adult learners. A wider range of lifelong education and training opportunities must become more available to adults in the changing workplace and society in which they find themselves.

This country can't accomplish its literacy agenda without making a substantial commitment of public resources to adult learning. At the same time, employers have a responsibility to train and educate their workers. The labor movement sees a need for dual commitments: Increased funding for adult education at all levels of government on the one hand, and greater financial investment by employers on the other.

A number of prominent organizations support the idea of more substantial employer investments, as we described earlier in this chapter. If, for example, companies devoted even 10% of their $30 billion annual training budget to basic skills, it would make an "enormous difference" in expanding the availability of workplace literacy programs, asserts Forrest Chisman of the Southport Institute, author of *Jump Start*, a 1989 study of adult literacy.

That investment in workers' skills can yield real financial returns for employers. "Human capital" has been shown to contribute far more to productivity gains than capital equipment. Brookings Institution economist Edward Denison has reported that advances in knowledge and increases in worker education accounted for 75% of the rise in productivity in this country between 1929 and 1982. By contrast, increases in machinery, plant, and equipment contributed only 15% to productivity growth.

These statistics show workers and their unions aren't the only ones who benefit from education and training. Investing in workers' skills is equally critical to the vitality and competitiveness of our national economy.

4. A Worker-Centered Learning Strategy

Unions have developed a highly successful worker-centered approach to workplace literacy. Programs are developed around workers' needs, and workers—through their unions—determine the program design. Literacy programs are made part of the broader education and training services offered to all workers, regardless of their skill level. "Worker-centered" doesn't mean that workers are the only ones who benefit, though. Employers benefit, too. Therefore, the largest and most effective programs are often developed jointly through the labor-management relationship.

Our Strategy Focuses on Workers' Needs

Unions' education and training programs are rooted in the needs of their members, the learners. They are *worker-centered.* This means that workers, through their union, have a central role in developing the programs. Their needs determine how the programs are designed, what they offer, and how they are taught.

The worker-centered strategy also recognizes that learning is a democratic, inclusive, and open process. Ideally, program content is as broad as possible, not limited to the most basic literacy skills. Opportunities for education or training are designed to appeal to all workers. Individual needs and differences are respected, and each learner takes responsibility for setting his or her own learning goals.

This approach enables workers to fulfill many different kinds of learning objectives—from occupational advancement to self-improvement. As workers meet their personal educational goals, they'll also prepare themselves for other life situations. The reading skills they need to be able to read to their children will also help them in their jobs and in their communities.

A worker-centered approach does more than help workers acquire new skills and knowledge, though. It helps them gain confidence in their individual and collective abilities and to assume greater control over their lives.

Building on this concept of worker-centered learning, unions have established workplace literacy programs that stand as models for the nation.

This Approach Also Benefits Employers

"Worker-centered" doesn't mean that workers are the only ones who benefit from this approach to learning. Their employers gain, too. Management and labor alike benefit from expertise that workers bring to designing and operating these programs. Everyone benefits from workers' articulation of what they need to learn and what they want to learn. Everyone gains from labor's experience with job-related skill training. Everyone benefits when workers have a chance to renew their skills to keep pace with change in the workplace.

What Is Worker-Centered Learning?

Keys to a worker-centered approach to learning include:

1. **Worker-centered learning builds on what workers already know.**

   This approach starts from workers' strengths, not from their deficiencies. Readers and non-readers alike bring a range of knowledge and skills to their classroom. A worker-centered program recognizes that these skills are part of what it means to be "literate" today. See Chapter 3, "Literacy in Today's Workplace."

2. **Worker-centered learning addresses the needs of the whole person.**

   A hallmark of the worker-centered program is its concern with the individual's total needs. It seeks to educate the whole person – not just to help workers perform their present jobs better, but to enlarge and enrich their capabilities as individuals, family members, trade unionists, and citizens. See Chapter 5, Step 2, "Identify Your Members' Needs and Goals."

3. **Workers and their unions are active in developing and planning these programs.**

   Worker involvement from the very beginning is critical to ensure that programs support workers' learning goals – and that they do not in any way jeopardize workers' jobs or earnings. See Chapter 5, Step 1, "Lay the Groundwork."

4. **Decision-making is a participatory process.**

   A "bottom-up" decision-making structure keeps programs closely attuned to workers' needs. It also helps ensure that programs are responsive to the views and concerns of workers. See Chapter 5, Step 1, "Lay the Groundwork," Step 4, "Define Your Union's Role," and Step 9, "Keep Your Program on Track."

5. **Workers have equal access to programs in their workplace.**

   Access is as broad as possible (within the limits of available resources), so workers can participate regardless of their present reading skills or their current job classifications. Participation should be voluntary. See Chapter 5, Step 8, "Encourage Your Members to Participate."

6. **Curriculum content and program structure reflect the diverse learning styles and needs of adult workers.**

   A worker-centered program respects different adult learning styles. Workers' active participation in setting their own educational goals helps build their confidence and self-esteem at the same time as it fosters learning. See Chapter 5, Step 7, "Design the Worker-Centered Classroom."

7. **Workers are involved in helping to design any tests or assessments.**

   Recognizing the limitations of most standardized tests and their frequent misuse, worker-centered programs keep these tests to a minimum. Learner-involved assessment is used to support learners' goals and provide positive feedback on their progress. See Chapter 5, Step 9, "Keep Your Program on Track."

8. **Classroom records are confidential.**

   Workers are assured of their privacy, so they can be confident that their performance in the classroom will not be shared with their employer. See Chapter 5, Step 8, "Encourage Your Members to Participate."

9. **Literacy programs may be integrated into a larger strategy for responding to anticipated changes in the workplace.**

   Basic skills instruction is often tied to a broader worker-centered education and training strategy, which, in turn, may be part of a larger agenda for preparing for change. See Chapter 1, "Agenda for a Changing Workplace," and Chapter 2, "Unions' Stake in Education and Literacy."

For this reason, worker-centered programs are often developed in the context of the collective bargaining relationship between unions and employers. These negotiated training agreements meet the needs of workers along with the needs of the employer. Financial support for training and education programs can be established under the collective bargaining agreement along with wages and benefits.

Unions have gained further support for their involvement in these programs in the 1989 report of the Commission on Workforce Quality. The Commission cites the "tremendous value" of worker contributions to the design and operation of workplace-based education and training programs.

Organized labor has always been the avowed enemy of illiteracy.

– 1918 Convention Resolution, American Federation of Labor

Labor welcomes the national interest in workplace literacy which supports unions' longtime advocacy of basic skills training. . . . We urge all affiliates to assist their members in improving basic skills through collectively bargained programs or in partnership with public education.

– 1989 Convention Resolutions, AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention

We've Learned from Unions' Experience

As unions have applied these principles of worker-centered learning to their own programs in a variety of settings, we've learned some lessons.

We've learned there's no quick fix for education and training needs. There's no magic pill we can offer our members. The teaching approach that works best for one adult may not be appropriate for another. A successful program for adult workers recognizes those varied learning styles and offers a mix of approaches.

We've learned about the harm these programs can inflict on our members if they're not done right. Unions must be alert to potential abuses (as described in Chapter 2, "Unions' Stake in Education and Literacy"). Workplace literacy isn't the quick answer to every workplace problem. It's only part of the solution. The complete strategy must be developed through labor-management dialogue on the broader issues in the changing workplace.

Labor-involved workplace literacy programs are among the models most widely cited for their effectiveness. Their accomplishments can be traced back to unions' special understanding of the needs and interests of the workers they represent.

Researchers at the City University of New York made these observations on labor's unique capabilities, in an evaluation of two large multi-union education programs in New York City:

"Trade unions are effective purveyors of this new educational medium [workplace literacy] because they are in daily contact with workers and therefore have an intimate knowledge of their personal and workplace needs; they understand the problems peculiar to worker education; they are trusted by their membership to work on their behalf; they have the experience and contacts to establish needed programs; and they speak the language of the average working man and woman.

". . . Students have . . . generally positioned themselves for a better life-style because of exposure to these programs. Attendance and retention rates were, in most cases, far better than the national average cited by the U.S. Department of Education for state-administered adult education programs."

Unions have applied the strategies discussed here in a variety of ways. Some unions actually run programs themselves. Some operate programs cooperatively with other unions or jointly with employers. In still other cases, the union's role is to link its members to the educational resources that are available through the schools or other community organizations.

You may have greatest control over a program if your union is in charge, but not all unions are in a position to take on operational responsibility. Each union must devise an approach that's appropriate to its own needs and opportunities. In Chapter 5, "How to Design a Worker-Centered Program," and Chapter 6, "What to Do If You Don't Operate a Program," this guide suggests how you can do that.

Part II. Designing a Worker-Centered Program

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5. How to Design a Worker-Centered Program

Sponsoring your own workplace literacy program is one way your union can advance your broader strategy for serving your members. You'll find that developing a worker-centered learning program involves many of the same steps you've gone through before with other programs.

In this chapter, we'll describe the nine basic steps to establishing your own workplace literacy program:

Step 1. Lay the groundwork

Step 2. Identify your members' needs and goals

Step 3. Negotiate funding

Step 4. Define your union's role

Step 5. Develop links with the education community

Step 6. Outline a plan of services

Step 7. Design the worker-centered classroom

Step 8. Encourage your members to participate

Step 9. Keep your program on track

Keep in mind that you'll often be involved with several steps at the same time. For instance, you may want to open your discussions with education agencies (Step 5) as soon as you've identified your members' educational goals (Step 2).

Built into these steps are checks and balances that ensure your program will meet the needs of the learners, your members.

As with the labor movement itself, where democracy is a cardinal principle, the design of your worker-centered program should reflect your members' needs and interests.

Ideally, its structure will engage workers actively in their own education. And its participatory approach should provide channels for your members to express opinions, voice needs, and find remedies to legitimate concerns about their educational program.

Step 1. Lay the Groundwork

Building on your union's current education program or an existing joint labor-management structure, you'll want to plan your new program as an integral part of your broader services to your members. When you're planning a negotiated program, your first objective is to agree on the program's general principles. You and the employer can then outline your intentions in a joint letter of intent.

Tap Your Union's Planning Resources

As in planning other kinds of union programs, you need to designate a planning group or task force to look into establishing a workplace literacy program. That planning group is likely to evolve into a more permanent board or committee if and when a program is started.

Therefore it's important that the members of the planning group have the time, interest, and ability to give the program the attention it requires. It's also helpful to include some of the workers likely to participate in the new program.

Whenever possible, link this planning effort to any related activities in which you're already engaged. For instance, if your union is already involved in education or training, you already have expertise to build on.

Obviously, one or more of the union's principal officers will most likely assume a leadership role to plan and launch a sound program. If you're planning a joint program with an employer, your existing labor-management structures provide a foundation for joint planning. An existing labor-management committee, for example, could serve as the core group for initial planning. Even when there has been a confrontational history between the employer and the union, a literacy or education program may be an area in which they can come together and find common ground.

You may want to make an informal inventory of your union's leadership resources. Who has special capabilities or knowledge useful for planning and operating the program? The issue of workplace literacy may spark the interest of members who haven't been active in the union before, enabling you to tap new resources among your members.

Your international or national union representative and your union's education staff can be valuable planning resources. Particularly when national agreements are involved, you will want to contact them at an early stage of your planning.

Planning Decisions

The planning team's responsibilities may include these key decisions about the program:

- articulating the program's goals and objectives
- explaining the program to each constituent group to gain their support
- developing the procedure for assessing workers' learning needs and goals
- determining appropriate responses to those needs
- planning specific educational and training services
- developing relationships with educational providers
- establishing the program's administrative structure

Develop a Broad Planning Base

For a successful program, you'll need a participatory planning process, so the union can tap as many resources and ideas as possible. Although "top-down" planning may be appropriate in some situations, in all likelihood it's out of place here. Since literacy consists of so many different skills, it's unwise to impose a "generic" program from above. Instead, it must be firmly grounded in the real needs of the workers as they perceive them themselves.

The "bottom-up" decision-making processes you establish in the planning stage will also be important when the program gets underway. You'll need feedback from workers on how well the program is doing. That will help you ensure that the program remains accountable to the workers' needs.

Lay Out the Ground Rules

Planning a workplace literacy program has been described as a *political process* – and for good reason. The employer and union are likely to have different perspectives on why they want the program. Those different interests must be balanced and brought together in a general statement that everyone can support. Often this is done in a joint letter of understanding or letter of intent. Therefore, one of your first goals will be to reach agreement on the program's general principles and to state them in a joint letter of intent. (See the "Sample Letter of Intent" at the end of this step.)

At this early stage of planning, the joint letter cannot provide complete details about the program, since you won't yet know what these will be. But it should address the broad principles of the program. There must be a general understanding about what the respective roles of the union and employer will be. From this consensus, you and the employer can plan together how the program will be carried out. Your specific roles and responsibilities will be spelled out later.

One of the most critical ground rules is that the union should be an equal partner with the employer in a joint program. If the employer doesn't fully recognize an equal role for the union, you will probably find it difficult to ensure that your members' interests are met. Missing from the employer's unilateral program will be the minimum level of trust and adequate safeguards that are essential for creating an effective learning environment in the workplace. As the American Society for Training and Development accurately observed in its *Workplace Basics* study:

> "Without employee concurrence and cooperation, the Workplace Basics program will never leave the launching pad."

If the union doesn't have an equal partnership role, we strongly advise you to drop the proposed program. In these situations, it is important to inform your members of your concerns about the program.

In your joint letter of intent, you may also want to state that the program will be open to all workers on a voluntary basis, with no penalty for those who decide not to participate. Another important ground rule is the confidentiality of classroom activities and tests. These principles are critical for ensuring the prospective learners that the program will not jeopardize their future employment.

Sample Letter of Intent

The following page shows you how one company and local union expressed their intent to cooperate in a learning program.

[Sample Letter of Intent]

Union and Company representatives have recently held a number of discussions on the subject of Workplace Literacy programs. These discussions have resulted in a clearer understanding between the parties of the mutual benefits to be derived from efforts in this area, and a commitment to jointly explore the possibilities of creating a pilot Education Enrichment Center at the Company. The following summarizes our understanding relative to the formation of such a center:

- An Advisory body comprised of an equal number of union and non-union representatives will be established to serve in a consultative capacity on curriculum, hours of operation, publicity, and other details related to the operation of the program. This group will have no budget, or final approval authority, but will make recommendations on matters related to this subject.

- The center will be open to all active employees in those areas identified for the pilot, on a voluntary basis. Enrollment and withdrawal will be totally at the individual employee's option and no compensation of any kind will be provided for class attendance. Establishment of this program will have no impact on the Company's current or planned training activities for which employees are scheduled by management and receive full compensation.

- Employees electing not to utilize the center or electing to voluntarily withdraw from programs offered by the center will not be penalized in any way.

- An employee's enrollment status and his or her progress with respect to any program or course of study offered by the center will be strictly confidential. Enrollees may, however, be required to participate in testing or other evaluative measures. The results of these evaluations, while not identifying individuals, may be used to appraise program effectiveness and communicated in aggregate.

- Either party may withdraw its support and endorsement of this program upon two weeks' written notice.

(Signed)
Company Industrial Relations Manager

(Accepted)
Local Union President

Step 2. Identify Your Members' Needs and Goals

Your members have diverse reasons for wanting education or training. Their needs and goals will be the basis for your program. By involving workers in a needs assessment, your union can help them articulate their goals. At the same time, an "employer training inventory" enables you to gauge how well existing training is meeting your members' needs. Involving workers in the needs assessment eliminates the need for troublesome "literacy audits."

Find Out What Workers Want

Everyone has personal reasons for wanting more education or training. When you plan a program, you have to find out what your members' educational aspirations are. Workers will want to participate in your program when they feel it can help them reach their own goals.

Workers' educational aspirations can go far beyond the workplace walls. A worker-centered program addresses those individual aspirations – not just the skills workers need for particular jobs, but education and training needed to achieve personal life goals. A worker-centered program does so in a way that respects the dignity and intelligence of the individual learner. And it does so in a way that supports the union's broader workplace goals. As researchers from the City University of New York commented in their evaluation of two union-sponsored programs in that city:

> "Invariably, students grew even more enthusiastic about their union relationship as a result of taking these courses."

By addressing the needs of the whole person, a union-sponsored program not only educates, but it also empowers. It opens doors to better jobs, but it also gives workers the skills and confidence to become better citizens, better parents, and better advocates for themselves and their families.

The diversity of your members' potential educational goals is illustrated on the next page, in the box "Reasons Workers May Want a Literacy Program."

Perform Your Own Needs Assessment

You know your members have education and training needs – as all workers do. It's your task to define them.

You don't have to rely solely on outside experts to gather information about your members' needs and interests. You have the expertise to do your own assessment. In doing this needs assessment, you'll

Reasons Workers May Want a Literacy Program

- to qualify for a promotion at work
- to learn skills that can lead to new kinds of work
- to meet job certification requirements
- to get a high school equivalency diploma (GED)
- to prepare for college
- to take college courses or to earn a degree
- to meet citizenship requirements
- to learn English as a second language
- to master functional skills needed in everyday life
- to be able to read to their children or grandchildren
- to be able to help their children with schoolwork
- to enrich themselves intellectually
- to feel better about themselves
- to become more active in their community and union

draw primarily on information you gather from discussions with your members. Their participation in the needs assessment will help them articulate their reasons for wanting an education or training program. Their involvement will also provide a solid basis for their concurrence in the program.

As the organization that represents these workers, you have a unique understanding of your members and their jobs. As we've noted in Chapter 2, "Unions' Stake in Education and Literacy," your members are more comfortable discussing their education and training needs with their union than with their supervisors. You are in a special position to help workers identify and define their goals: educational goals, career goals, and personal goals. You're also uniquely situated to translate those goals into a program that serves your members' needs.

The goals of a workplace literacy program can't be imposed by the employer. The reason for this was well stated by James L. Turk of the Ontario Federation of Labour in Canada, at a 1989 literacy symposium:

> "The fact that they are not *employers'* programs is important. They must be, and be perceived to be, the workers' own programs – dedicated to workers' needs.... People only learn when they want to learn, not when someone wants to teach them. Trying to impose a workplace curriculum is as bad as trying to impose any other curriculum."

Selecting an Outside Expert

If your union decides to engage a consultant to help with the needs assessment, or if you later decide to hire a curriculum specialist to develop instruction, here are some tips to help you select a qualified expert.

- **Good technical skills are important but they're not all you're looking for. If outside experts don't understand what you and your members want, you'll have a hard time working with them, and their usefulness will be severely limited. It's much the same as choosing a good lawyer or arbitrator for your union.**
- **Choose someone who's knowledgeable about your industry and the work your members do.**
- **Find someone who is familiar with your union and understands the issues of concern to your members.**

When you involve workers in defining the program's goals, the program they create will have a clear workers' identity. They will feel comfortable about participating.

In a joint labor-management program, the needs assessment is certainly part of the political process that we described in Step 1. Labor and management will each have its own needs and goals. Where workers' goals may be quite personal (see the previous box, "Reasons Workers May Want a Literacy Program,"), employers' needs may be strictly economic: to train workers on new equipment, for example, to make the company more competitive. Their differing perspectives must be reconciled in the program's design. Mistrust and apprehension can be avoided when planning is truly joint, with workers participating as an equal partner through their union. An existing labor-management committee, for example, might serve as a forum for discussing your different goals and priorities.

We've suggested a framework for your needs assessment in the "Sample Questionnaire for a Needs Assessment," which appears at the end of this step. You can cover these questions in consultations with union officers, union members, and appropriate supervisory personnel. Small-group discussions provide an appropriate setting for gathering this information. If it's a joint program, you'll bring your findings to your joint discussions with management. In either case, the answers you collect will help you

- assess the skills your members need in the workplace,
- assess their broader educational goals,

- determine what training or education would help them meet these needs, and
- determine what additional supportive services they need.

Analyze Skill Demands in the Workplace

If new equipment or new work processes are anticipated, you'll want to assess how they'll affect the skills your members use in their jobs. In your needs assessment, you should review your members' jobs and the skills required to perform them, including any proposed or recent changes.

Unions have a broad range of technical experience that is useful in assessing literacy needs in the workplace. As a union leader, you do not have to defer to educators or personnel officers on job analysis issues. In fact, unions are just as qualified as many employers to engage in an assessment of workplace basic skill needs.

- *job descriptions*

  You have probably worked on job descriptions in collective bargaining. You may even have done your own job classification studies. You can make sure that job descriptions present a complete, current picture of each job, as a basis for determining what skills are required to perform those jobs.

Facing New Testing and Certification Requirements

New licensing and certification requirements can create a special need for education and training. Although workers may be performing their jobs effectively and may have years of experience in their occupation, test-taking requirements can create serious anxiety and jeopardize their job security. If your members face new certification laws, your union can do the following:

1. Work with the regulatory agency to determine whether certification tests are actually required in your members' jobs.
2. If they are, work toward ensuring that present workers are exempt from new requirements on the basis of their demonstrated work experience. Experienced workers should not have new job requirements imposed on their positions by employers without negotiation with the union.
3. For new members or others who will need to pass certification tests, develop a learning program to help them with occupational skills, as well as basic education skills (including test-taking).

- *skill analyses*

  To support grievances, many unions have prepared studies of the skills and duties required for particular positions. By combining that experience with interviews of the workers who hold those jobs, you can conduct a fair and balanced study of the skills needed to perform specific jobs.

- *worker qualifications*

  Your union may also have conducted reviews of workers' skills and qualifications to perform their jobs, to support grievance cases. You can use the same approach in analyzing current skills and projected training needs.

In each of these areas, workers will contribute unique insights into the job content and skill requirements of their positions. They are often the best ones to pinpoint problems in work processes. They will usually be keenly aware of those operations that require more advanced skills in reading, math, or communication.

Your union may be able to use this kind of analysis to document increased skill levels required because of workplace changes in each occupation the union represents. Those findings may also help you document the need for wages and benefits commensurate with the skills workers use in their jobs.

Assess Current Training Opportunities

The best way to find out if your members already have access to the education and training they need in their jobs is to make your own assessment of their employer's existing programs. Steps for taking an inventory of the training provided at the workplace appear in the box "Employer Training Inventory."

As part of your broader workplace agenda, you'll want to consider how to build on the existing education or training activities that you've identified through your inventory. Through your established labor-management relationships, you may want to negotiate a more comprehensive education and training program that includes literacy to address unmet needs. Your inventory of the employer's training efforts, together with your assessment of members' education and training needs, will help you demonstrate what training gaps exist and how best to respond.

Your employer training inventory will document what's being done formally to help workers update their skills. If the employer doesn't offer formal education or training, workplace learning undoubtedly is taking place informally. For example, experienced workers may be responsible for explaining job duties to new employees. The training inventory should alert you to the shortcomings of existing skill renewal efforts. You may be able to correct those shortcomings through a new program.

Employer Training Inventory

To document what's being done to help your members update or maintain their skills, answer these questions about your employer's existing education and training programs. Any training gaps you identify will show you where new programs are needed.

1. Who is getting education or training opportunities now?
2. What kinds of skills are they learning (occupational, academic, citizenship, or some combination)?
3. What is the stated purpose of this education or training (new hires, job advancement, new equipment, tuition reimbursement)?
4. Who provides the education or training?
5. Is training done formally (taught by an instructor) or informally (taught by a fellow worker on the job)?
6. What are the actual outcomes? (How many workers finish training? How many move up to new jobs? How many complete a high school equivalency program?)
7. How do workers feel about these programs after participating in them?
8. In general, how do workers regard the employer's training efforts, whether or not they've participated in them?
9. What is the union's role (determining learning needs, developing curriculum, selecting learners, selecting instructors, conducting training classes, counseling learners, evaluating results)?
10. Are these programs jointly negotiated under the collective bargaining agreement?
11. How were workers' education and training needs determined?
12. What additional needs are there that aren't being met?
13. How do workers get into the education or training program?

(box continued on next page)

Employer Training Inventory (continued)

14. Is participation voluntary?

15. Is the method of instruction appropriate for adult learners (showing respect for learners, relating subjects to the workers' lives, using varied instructional approaches)?

16. Do classes take place at convenient times and locations? On work time or after hours?

17. How much money does the employer currently spend for education and training programs?

18. How much of that investment goes to train your members and other nonmanagerial workers?

Appraise the Need for Support Services

Beyond the specific education and training needs you've identified, your members may also benefit from support services. These services can help them overcome obstacles to education or training. For example:

- *educational counseling* — to help workers set their own educational goals and strategies

- *educational referrals* — to help workers locate local agencies and institutions where they can continue their education or training after the workplace literacy program is finished, particularly when they can take advantage of tuition reimbursement or other continuing education support negotiated by their union

- *social services counseling and referral* — to assist in resolving financial or family problems that otherwise prevent workers from furthering their education

- *child care* — to help parents find caretakers for their children while they are in class

- *support in the workplace* — for example, putting workplace materials into plain English, resolving production problems that affect workers' productivity and morale, training experienced workers as mentors or counselors

These support services can be coordinated with appropriate negotiated benefits that are available to your members, such as child care. AFL-CIO Community Services staff can help you expand your union's existing contacts with local agencies and organizations that provide other needed services.

Many unions find that programs are most effective when they are tied to a comprehensive network of support services. Developing your own network, you'll draw on the relationships your union has already established with public and private nonprofit agencies in your area – social service organizations, churches, community groups, and the like.

Protect Your Members from "Literacy Audits"

Employers sometimes insist on conducting formal "literacy audits" or job task analyses as a first step in designing a workplace literacy program. But you must be alert to their dangers. At a minimum, they are likely to undermine workers' confidence in the proposed literacy or other education activity. At worst, these audits create an arbitrary standard for evaluating workers' performance, placing workers' jobs in jeopardy.

A literacy audit tests workers' reading, writing, math, and reasoning skills. It often involves giving standardized adult basic education tests to all or most employees. Even worse, sometimes "problem" employees are singled out and tested.

Literacy Audits: Potential for Abuse

Too often literacy audits are used to justify management decisions that jeopardize workers' jobs and earnings:

- Supervisors may use test scores as their primary evaluation standard, regardless of how workers are actually performing their jobs.
- Workers with low scores in the literacy audit may be replaced by new hires.
- Workers may be pigeonholed in positions that have no advancement potential.
- Workers may be denied future wage increases on the basis of skill deficiencies identified in the literacy audit.
- Job classifications may be assigned a "grade level" and workers may be disqualified from bidding on them because of their test scores.
- Management may cite identified "skill deficiencies" to justify its opposition to subsequent wage or benefit increases.

These examples show why a union will probably refrain from endorsing a proposed program unless the union is a full partner from the earliest stage of planning, where it can look after its members' long-term as well as immediate interests.

Some employers accompany the literacy audit with a job task analysis, where workers are observed to determine how they do their jobs and what skills they use. Findings from the job analysis and literacy audit can be compared to show whether workers possess the skills that they purportedly need for their jobs. Then, in theory, skill upgrading programs can be designed to address the specific demands of the jobs.

The problem is that a literacy audit undermines the minimum level of trust that's essential for a workplace literacy program to begin. Often employers embark on literacy audits even before labor and management have agreed on whether to operate a program at all (as in the letter of intent described earlier). If workers haven't yet become convinced that a training program will serve their interests, the prospect of literacy testing can understandably create genuine apprehension. Workers may fear that test results will be used to penalize low performers instead of helping them. Since their union isn't a party to the testing plan, they have no advocate to protect their interests, and they are likely to be skeptical of management's reassurances. In these circumstances, unions find it difficult, if not impossible, to endorse the program.

Literacy testing and observation of workers don't belong in a worker-centered education, training, or literacy program. You don't even need them to plan your program. You can find out what you need to know through the approaches we've discussed here and in Step 1 ("Lay the Groundwork"): a planning team – drawn from union and employer representatives – and a needs assessment process that involves workers in identifying their education and training needs. From this joint process, your union and the employer can agree on the need for a program without going through formal literacy testing. From there you can jointly develop any studies needed as a basis for further planning.

At that stage, you may determine that it's appropriate for your union to participate with the employer in a jointly designed and conducted job analysis, to document the skills workers need in their jobs. If so, you may wish to consider a job analysis as described on the next page, in the box "Criteria for Worker-Involved Job Analysis."

Criteria for Worker-Involved Job Analysis

If your union has determined that it's in the best interests of your members to participate in a job analysis, the following criteria can help you to develop meaningful worker involvement in analyzing their jobs.

- Union leadership determines the proposed job analysis process and describes it to its members:
    - how job classifications will be selected for inclusion in the study
    - how a sympathetic consultant will be selected (if desired) to work with the union in performing the analysis
    - how workers will participate in analyzing their jobs
    - how the findings will be used
- Workers are involved in preparing the description of job duties for their positions.
- No job observation is performed without the cooperation of the workers involved, and then only with plenty of advance time for planning and union monitoring.
- Job tasks are analyzed to show the range of occupational and functional skills that contribute to the performance of each job – not to link jobs to grade levels or to develop other criteria to screen workers out of jobs.
- Union representatives participate in setting the performance criteria to be used in reviewing how workers perform their current jobs.
- Job analysis findings show an understanding of the growing training requirements in the workplace, rather than emphasizing only workers' "skill deficiencies."
- Workers receive assurances that job analysis findings will be used only for program planning – not as a basis for firing, transferring, or limiting the future wages of those whose jobs are assessed.
- Workers are offered the opportunity to learn new skills to meet identified needs, if they so choose.

(box continued on next page)

Criteria for Worker-Involved Job Analysis (continued)

- Unions participate in establishing a worker-involved process for setting education and training goals.
- Individual workers help set training goals for their own jobs, in cooperation with their supervisors, using job analysis findings.

Understand Legal Issues on Testing

Before you endorse any form of literacy testing, we advise you to be aware of the potential legal liabilities. When an employer uses tests as the basis for any employment decisions -- hiring, training, promotion, demotion, layoff -- then those tests must meet the criteria for nondiscrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Title VII bars employment-related tests that have a discriminatory effect on any group (race, national origin, sex, or religion). Such tests are illegal even if the employer didn't *intend* to discriminate. If your union agrees to a literacy audit that uses one of these tests, the union could also be legally liable.

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that tests cannot be used as the basis for employment decisions unless they meet three criteria:

- *impact on protected groups*

  Is any protected group adversely affected? If not, the test is acceptable under Title VII. If it excludes any group

How NOT to Do a Needs Analysis

The experience of a Pennsylvania precision-parts manufacturing plant illustrates what goes wrong when workers don't take part in the needs assessment process. In this plant there was no union, and the workers had no one to look after their interests when the company conducted a basic skills audit.

"One of the major issues . . . was that many of the workers were uncomfortable with the assessment strategy," according to a report by Pennsylvania State University researchers Gary D. Geroy and Michael G. Erwin. "Many workers also were apprehensive about how the results would be handled." The plant teemed with rumors about what would happen to workers who didn't make the grade. The researchers blamed the high levels of anxiety on the company's failure to communicate with its workers.

disproportionately, the test must meet the two additional criteria or else it cannot be used.

- *job-relatedness*

  Is there a correlation between test performance and job performance? The test must be validated to show that connection. A validated test may be acceptable even if it adversely affects protected groups.

- *business necessity*

  Is there a legitimate business need for the test? If the test has an adverse impact on protected groups, the employer must show why another, nondiscriminatory test can't be used instead.

When an employer is determined to test workers' basic skills, you should know your members' legal rights and the *restrictions that may apply to using tests*. You may want to consult with legal counsel. As background reading, refer to the article by the Business Council for Effective Literacy (BCEL) on "Employers and the Law of Literacy" (listed in Appendix C, "Useful Books and Articles"). As BCEL points out in that article, federally approved procedures for employee testing appear in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures* (also listed in Appendix C).

Sample Questionnaire for a Needs Assessment

You can use these sample questions in your discussions with union officers, union members, and supervisors to gather initial information on your members' education and training needs – including literacy-related issues. (This is not suggested as a format for a written questionnaire to be sent out.)

A. Discussions with union officers, stewards, and staff:

1. What changes are taking place in the workplace?
   - Has new equipment or new technology been introduced?
   - Have work practices changed?
   - Have layoffs taken place?
   - Have new jobs been created? Or old jobs restructured?
2. Are members troubled by new assignments?
   - Problems with new equipment?
   - Difficulty with job assignments?
   - Concern about increased reading, writing, or math?
   - Have they filed grievances over new job assignments, which may reflect the above problems?

(box continued on next page)

Sample Questionnaire for a Needs Assessment (continued)

3. Are workers aware of new job opportunities, and do they apply for the jobs?
   - Do new job openings have formal education requirements?
   - If so, do your members meet these requirements?

4. Do members attend local adult education programs?
   - Are they satisfied with the programs?
   - Have they dropped out of such programs?

5. Does the union (or employer) offer a tuition reimbursement program?
   - Do members use it?
   - What kinds of educational programs are they taking?

6. Do members understand the terms and conditions of their fringe benefits, such as health, legal, and education?

7. Do any government certification requirements affect members' jobs (as has been the case with truck drivers, nurse aides, asbestos workers)?
   - Will workers have to be tested?
   - Are they getting assistance to prepare for the tests?

B. Discussions with union members:

1. What changes have you seen in your job?
   - What training are you getting to help you learn new job skills?
   - Are there changes you would make in work practices that would help you perform your job?
   - Does the equipment you use make your job easier?

2. Which of these basic educational skills do you use most in your work? Which ones do you use less often?
   - Reading?
   - Writing?
   - Oral communication?
   - Math?
   - Problem-solving?
   - Others?

(box continued on next page)

Sample Questionnaire for a Needs Assessment (continued)

3. What kinds of written materials do you use in your job?
   - Procedures manuals?
   - Inventory sheets?
   - Operating instructions?
   - Safety notices?
   - Job descriptions?
   - Employee benefits handbooks?
   - Others?

4. What difficulties do you have when you use those written materials?
   - Hard to use?
   - Written in complex or confusing language?
   - Other specific problems?

5. What training have you been given to help you use these materials?
   - Training in a classroom setting?
   - Informal training by another worker?
   - Other training?

6. Are the written qualifications for your job realistic, considering the work to be performed?
   - Are further skills appropriate for doing the job?
   - What problems do you encounter performing your work?
   - Should the work be redesigned? (If so, in what way?)

7. What would help you perform your job better?
   - Different equipment?
   - Different work practices?
   - Education or training?

8. What additional skills would you need for job advancement?
   - How long have you worked in your current job?
   - What are the jobs to which you might advance (either with this employer or elsewhere)?
   - What new skills do those jobs require?
   - What training or education would help you acquire those skills?

(box continued on next page)

Sample Questionnaire for a Needs Assessment (continued)

9. What kinds of reading do you do?
    - Reading for pleasure?
    - Reading the newspaper?
    - Reading to your children or grandchildren?

10. Have you taken GED or adult education classes to improve your reading skills?
    - What did you like or dislike about that program?
    - Did you complete the program?

11. Are you interested in continuing your education?
    - What subjects interest you?
    - Would you like to complete your high school degree?
    - Take a college prep course?
    - Enter a college degree program?
    - Take a specialized technical course?
    - Study for the citizenship exam?
    - Take other courses?

12. Aside from work, how would further education help you with your home and family responsibilities?

13. What additional services would make it easier for you to attend classes (for example, child care)?

C. Discussions with sympathetic supervisors:

1. What general problems do workers have performing their jobs?

2. What training does the employer currently provide to address this?

3. What changes might help workers perform their jobs better?
    - More education and training?
    - New equipment?
    - Restructuring of work processes?

Step 3. Negotiate Funding

A negotiated education or training agreement with your employer can provide the funding support your program needs. Supplemental government grants may prove useful as seed money to give the employer further incentive for investing in the program. Your negotiations will be framed in the context of your union's (and the employer's) broader agenda for coping with workplace change.

Broaden Your Discussions with the Employer

In your discussions with signatory employers, your union has the opportunity to broaden the discussion of workplace conditions to include skill renewal along with wages, working conditions, safety, and other issues. Jointly negotiated education and training programs can be an important component of your union's strategy for protecting your members' jobs while keeping their skills up to date. Employers, with their growing awareness of workplace literacy needs, may be more receptive to such a program than ever before.

Asking for the employer's support doesn't prevent your union from operating the program. Many well-established negotiated programs are union-operated. Those employers recognize that the union's imprint on the program can be critical to its success. Workers are more likely to participate and learn when they perceive it as their own program rather than management's. The general deterioration of trust and respect that employees at all levels feel toward top management, as documented in a December 1989 *Fortune* magazine cover story, will certainly extend to any training program that appears to serve management interests only. The employer will need to rely on the union in the joint program even more than the union needs the employer.

We urge you to look to a negotiated education or training agreement with your employer for several important reasons.

- *continuity*

  By tying the program to the collective bargaining process or labor-management relationship, you can deal with education and training needs in the context of other workplace priorities. You can fashion a program that meets the needs of your members, your union, and the employer.

- *funding stability*

  With a negotiated program, you can obtain a firm funding commitment for the period of your collective bargaining agreement. You won't have the uncertainties about future funding levels that you have when you rely on outside funds, such as government grants.

- *timeliness*

  As we noted in Chapter 2, "Unions' Stake in Education and Literacy," many employers today have a heightened awareness of worker education needs. The national attention to literacy has awakened many of them to the importance of continuing opportunities for adult basic skills education. Employer organizations and government leaders are also pressing employers to do more to meet workers' ongoing learning needs. The time appears ripe to open discussions on joint learning endeavors that include literacy.

- *a problem-resolution process*

  Labor and management already have in place an established procedure for resolving problems. The grievance procedures under your contract are readily available to your members if problems arise.

- *nonfinancial support*

  Employers can contribute to the program's success in many ways. Management staff who know about company plans can help you anticipate new skill requirements. The employer's training staff may help design work-related instruction. The employer may be able to donate appropriate training materials, classroom space (if you decide to hold classes at work), tools and equipment from the workplace, and the like.

- *demonstrated success*

  As we've shown in the examples of joint programs cited in this guide, negotiated education and training programs are serving workers in virtually every industry. The effectiveness of this approach has been widely recognized, and joint programs are acknowledged models for workplace literacy. Their success is based in shared commitment and joint effort, which allows programs to meet the needs of both labor and management.

> *Workplace programs work best with the cooperation of the employer while remaining labour run.*
>
> *–James L. Turk*
> *Ontario Federation of Labour*
> *1989*

Bring These Programs to the Table

Education and training become a subject for labor-management discussion in a variety of ways.

Some unions bargain for education or training as a *fringe benefit*. The cost of the program becomes part of the negotiated fringe benefits package. This is the approach taken by the Food and Beverage Workers Union Local 32, a

New Trends in Negotiated Programs

Unions have been negotiating learning programs for decades. What's new with today's programs is their diversity and, often, their size. Unions large and small are involved in education and training at unprecedented levels in construction, manufacturing, government, service occupations, communications, transportation, and elsewhere throughout the economy. Basic literacy skills are integrated into most of these programs.

Some of the most widely acclaimed negotiated programs are the multi-million-dollar ones that unions have established at major manufacturing companies under national joint agreements. In the vanguard of these giant ventures, starting in 1982, came the education and training programs negotiated by the United Auto Workers with the big three U.S. auto makers. Among the more recent joint endeavors is the Career Development Institute created in 1989 by the United Steelworkers of America with several steel industry employers. Outside the manufacturing sector, one of the most visible programs is the Alliance for Employee Growth and Development established by the Communications Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers with AT&T.

Not to be eclipsed by these mammoth programs are the scores of smaller programs that unions have mounted at hospitals, nursing homes, cafeterias, hotels, bakeries, and numerous other establishments.

All of these negotiated programs give expression to the shared concerns of the company and union for continual renewal of job-related skills as well as opportunities for personal growth.

Washington, D.C. affiliate of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union. Under that union's agreement with food service vendors, education is part of the benefit package – along with health and legal benefits – that is available to cafeteria workers through collectively bargained fringe benefit monies, which are set aside in a trust.

Another approach is the negotiated *apprenticeship and training trust*. Building and construction trades unions have exercised this approach with their contractors for many decades. The construction industry's training trust agreements are developed jointly by the individual unions and their signatory employers or contractor associations. Those trust agreements establish a training fund. Contributions to the fund are determined through the collective bargaining process.

Other unions have sought education and training in *impact bargaining*, where labor and management discuss ways to lessen the impact of policies that adversely affect the workplace. The policies themselves – decisions to introduce new technology or to close a facility, for example – may not be negotiable under current labor law. But unions can negotiate the impact of those policies. One union that has engaged in such negotiations is the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), Local 717, in Warren, Ohio. When the Packard Electric Division of General Motors proposed new high tech production processes designed to increase the plant's competitiveness, IUE negotiated a comprehensive job security and retraining program for workers at the Warren plant. The program, covering both basic education and technical skills, has enabled IUE members to move into the high tech work.

Sometimes in impact bargaining, retraining and readjustment services are established for displaced workers. Programs for laid-off union members may later be expanded to serve those who are still on the job. For instance, the Auto Workers and Communications Workers training funds began in that fashion (see the box, "New Trends in Negotiated Programs").

In some cases, education and training may be an issue that you'll bring before a *labor-management committee*. If you have a labor-management participation team (LMPT), quality of worklife committee (QWL), or something similar, they may be the appropriate place to discuss your members' literacy needs.

When your union represents public employees but doesn't have the right to bargain, your discussions with management will have to take place in another forum. Here, too, an existing LMPT or QWL committee may serve your needs. When none exists, the union-employer relationships that are developed in planning an education or training program could lead to other forms of dialogue.

Develop Collective Bargaining Language

Before you open discussions with your employer, you should examine your current collective bargaining agreement. You may already have language you can build on to expand or establish a program.

You should also review how education and training have been handled in past negotiations. Who handled the issue for management, and what were their priorities and concerns related to training?

If your union has any influence in determining who will be present on the employer's side in your negotiations, you may want to consider involving the employer's human resource development or training specialists. Their work routinely involves training issues, so they sometimes are more aware of workers' learning needs than, for example, the employer's labor relations experts. If the labor relations staff has the real authority to negotiate an agreement, though, you'll obviously want to work closely with them as well in developing the best contract language.

The language of your joint agreement, tailored to your specific worksite, should

What to Cover in Your Contract

The broad agreement that you negotiate with management could spell out the following information about the joint program. More detailed information can be covered in a separate document, such as a joint memorandum of understanding. Of course, the specific language you adopt should address your own circumstances.

- Recognize the need for ongoing learning as a means of fulfilling personal as well as job-related goals.
- State the purpose and goals of the joint program.
- Set up the funding mechanism and specify the funding rate (for example, the contribution per hour or per capita).
- Describe the governing structure, specifying equal roles for the union and employer.
- Provide a procedure for resolving problems (supplementing existing grievance procedures).
- Describe the new program's relation to existing benefits (such as a tuition reimbursement program).
- Spell out employment security provisions related to the program (for example, offer participation in the program instead of demotion or layoff as a response to workplace changes, and ensure that low literacy test scores won't be cause for dismissal or pay loss).
- Endorse the principles of worker-centered learning, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respect for individual learning needs.
- If desired, provide for financial incentives (for instance, release time with pay, training stipends).
- Describe any related services to be offered (such as educational counseling or child care).

support the worker-centered approaches that are so critical to success. Usually the contract language provides broad authorization for the education or training program. It should describe the program's goals as well as spell out the respective roles of labor and management. The bargaining agreement may authorize an education or training trust fund to handle monies. A procedure for problem resolution should also be specified.

Your joint agreement must also stipulate how the program will be funded and at what level. Often the funding formula is based on the number of hours, weeks, or months worked by covered employees. In other cases, employers make a per-capita contribution.

Issues that are generally covered in a collective bargaining agreement on education or training appear in the box, "What to Cover in Your Contract."

In addition to the broad language of the collective bargaining agreement, specific features of the program are usually spelled out in supplementary documents that are jointly developed. These may include a joint letter of understanding, program guidelines, program manual, or a trust agreement, for instance.

Establish Dialogue on Anticipated Changes

Because the workplace is constantly changing, you and your members will want to keep fully informed about how these changes will affect your jobs. Many unions have found ways of participating with employers to prepare for change. Employers often can be slow to acknowledge change; the initiative to act may have to come from the union.

Through your established collective bargaining relationships, for example, your union might open channels of communication through which you're kept constantly apprised of any management plans that affect the skills workers need in their jobs. Information must be freely available so that you can help workers and the employer alike to prepare for those changes.

Moreover, you may want to establish channels for the union to communicate recommendations on changes that your members want. As the American Society for Training and Development puts it in *The Learning Enterprise*:

> "[Workers'] hands-on experience with the product and customer contact make them prime experts and the front-line listening posts for new efficiencies, quality improvements, new applications, and innovations."

When you get advance warning of proposed changes, you and the employer can work together to cushion your members from the impact of new skill requirements such as the following:

- introducing new equipment
- applying new technology
- redesigning production processes
- making control processes more worker-centered
- decentralizing problem-solving to the production level
- adding new products or services
- eliminating existing products or services
- increasing direct customer contacts
- complying with new occupational certification requirements

Some employers may resist planning for change. But that's a costly mistake. Lack of planning and consultation with the union can force an employer into hasty, last-minute personnel decisions. For example, by putting off planning for new technology until the last minute, management may decide it's too late for retraining. As a last resort, the employer may attempt to fire experienced workers and hire replacement workers who already have the desired skills. But what its long-time workers lack in high tech skills, they may make up for in other invaluable, irreplaceable skills: knowledge of the company, understanding of the company's goals and needs, and loyalty to the employer and their fellow workers—not to mention the many occupational skills that will transfer to new work situations.

"A fire-hire policy not only demoralizes the rest of the organization; it often proves to be the more expensive option, once the dollar-and-cents costs of dismissal and replacement are calculated," the Work in America Institute has found. In *Training—The Competitive Edge*, the Institute puts it bluntly: "Such a situation must be recognized for what it is: a failure to plan."

Based on company case studies, this Work in America Institute report highlights the importance of confronting change early. It also recommends that unions be partners in planning for change:

Mutual Benefits of Joint Planning

"A classic case demonstrating the difference between a management program and a cooperative venture was played out in a major Philadelphia hospital," reports District 1199C, AFSCME, in its manual, *Creating a Union-Management Educational Partnership.*

Unilaterally, the hospital introduced computers into a 25-person unit. After completing the hospital's computer training program, four of the workers were laid off because the hospital deemed their skill levels deficient.

"The union filed a grievance and the case eventually went to arbitration, a long and costly procedure," according to the union. "As a result, the hospital was forced to rehire two of the workers."

Eventually the hospital was ready to computerize its entire operation. This time it came to the union first and proposed a cooperative training program. The union agreed. With help from grant money obtained by the District 1199C Training Fund, the union conducted basic skills training and an introduction to the computer. The hospital provided the computer-specific skills training.

With this cooperative approach to learning, the entire workforce of 800 made a successful changeover to computers. No one had to be laid off.

"The employer should regard union involvement as a plus rather than a minus. . . . Both parties benefit most when the union becomes a full partner in the training enterprise. . . . Management and employees (and their unions) should team up to analyze needs, develop curricula, design training materials, instruct, and evaluate results."

Look at Grants as Seed Money

Government grants can sometimes be used along with negotiated funds. A grant can serve as seed money to help your joint program get off the ground. Or it might be used to supplement and broaden your program's services. While outside funds don't relieve an employer of its responsibilities for human resource development, these funds can give the employer an additional incentive to invest in education and training.

The major sources of grant funds are described in Appendix B, "Outside Funding Resources."

Sources of Advance Information for Planning Your Program

If you haven't already done so, you and your signatory employers may want to establish ongoing dialogue about anticipated changes affecting your members' jobs and skills. In addition, be alert to warning signs that can tip you off to changing skill requirements.

Create labor-management dialogue by:

- making specific provisions in collective bargaining agreements to require early planning for workplace changes that will affect jobs or skill levels
- forming a joint committee or task force to identify changes in skill requirements and determine appropriate training
- using an existing labor-management structure (such as a joint labor-management committee) to identify changing skill requirements and new training needs

Watch for these early warning signals:

- increased attrition in jobs where new skills are being demanded
- lack of upward mobility; members are not bidding on higher jobs
- increased number of grievances involving changes in the work situation, such as new job duties or denial of promotions
- attempts by management to restructure jobs, for example by combining duties or inserting a new level of positions with higher skill requirements
- attempts by management to establish or revise educational requirements for jobs
- reports by workers themselves that they are having difficulty with new job requirements

Step 4. Define Your Union's Role

Operating the program yourself gives your union its best opportunity to integrate this education or training activity into your union's other plans and programs. If you don't think you can take on this responsibility by yourself, consider sharing responsibility with other unions or with your members' employer.

Give the Program a Union Label

By assuming a key role in operating the program, your union can give it a special relevance for your members that's often missing from adult education. Ideally, if resources permit, you'll decide to operate the program yourself. If this isn't practical, an equally effective approach may be to form a consortium with another union or group of unions to share the operational responsibilities. With either approach, the program can have a clear union identity.

As the AFSCME and Seafarer programs illustrate (see the boxes, "Union-Run Classes for City Workers" and "A Union-Operated Campus"), employers can also see the advantages of having programs run by the union. Placing the union in the principal operating role should certainly be considered even when programs are financed under collective bargaining agreements.

Look at the Benefits of Being the Operator

Serving as the operator of an education, training, or literacy program helps your union in a number of ways, whether you do it on your own or in a consortium with other unions.

First, we've seen that education is indeed a bread-and-butter issue for unions. Education and training can help you achieve your broader priorities as a union (see Chapter 2, "Unions' Stake in Education and Literacy"), and, in this way, these programs can be as important to you as your more traditional functions, such as handling members' grievances. Operating a program gives you a chance to integrate education with these broader union priorities. You can make it part of a comprehensive union program for serving your members.

Second is the ability a program gives you to respond swiftly to your members' education and training needs. If your members are suddenly faced with new certification requirements, as an example, you can respond quickly by adapting your program to their immediate needs.

Union-Run Classes for City Workers

Basic skills constitute one of the largest components of the education program for New York City employees that's run by District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. With support from collective bargaining agreements with the city of New York, the union has been holding classes for its members since 1971. Besides basic skills, AFSCME also offers high school equivalency classes (GED) and career training.

Funded as a fringe benefit, the program is administered by the union's Education Fund. Budget requirements are reviewed by the District Council 37 Benefits Trust Fund, and management has the right to approve or disapprove proposed training courses.

Because the union operates the program, it has been able to tailor services to its members' needs. The teachers are experienced in adult and worker education, and union representatives offer counseling as well. Classes are designed to meet members' interests, and they're scheduled and sited to accommodate workers on different shifts.

Third, union control means more flexibility in program structure and design. You'll be able to tailor the program to your members. If they express personal interest in special classes, such as child development or family economics, you can develop courses on those subjects. You'll have freedom to design a worker-oriented curriculum, select the instructors, and establish any supportive services your members may need.

A fourth advantage is that when the program is run by the learners' own organization, their union, they take special pride in it. It becomes *their* program. The skills and knowledge they gain from it will symbolize what workers can do for one another through their union.

Running a program, of course, places responsibilities on your union. Your union needs to be prepared to assume the administrative responsibilities that go with the program. That includes overseeing the program's financial integrity. Even when you decide to purchase some program services from schools or educational consultants, you still bear ultimate responsibility.

A Union-Operated Campus

The advantages of a campus learning environment are found at the union-operated Seafarers Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship in Piney Point, Maryland. Basic skills are part of the wide-ranging curriculum taught there under a nationally negotiated agreement between the Seafarers International Union (SIU) and maritime industry employers. Founded in 1953, the residential school provides a combination of entry, upgrade, and academic skills training to help SIU members keep abreast of changing needs in the industry as well as meet personal learning goals.

A joint labor-management board oversees the school. Under the national collective bargaining agreement, its funding is contributed on the basis of weeks worked. The union staffs and teaches the program.

Individualized instruction helps workers deal with the increasingly complex requirements of the modern maritime industry. The learning program also helps workers meet their own educational goals. On the school's roster of basic skills courses are a reading skills program, adult basic education, high school equivalency, and English as a second language. Seamen and women can receive job certification as well as a two-year college degree.

Consider a Shared Operating Role

If your program can't be solely union-operated, consider sharing an operating role with management as an alternative. Some of the largest and most widely publicized worker education and training programs are run jointly in this way. Under some negotiated agreements, the company and union have created a nonprofit training organization, answerable to both sides, to carry out the program.

This kind of partnership can only work when the union and management have developed a basis for cooperation. That doesn't mean that labor or management give up their advocacy roles. What it does mean is that they can recognize shared goals and find the means to work toward them together.

Although union-operated programs are often labor's first choice, jointly operated programs also offer potential benefits to unions.

Primarily, you'll gain a new opportunity to involve the employer in a joint planning effort to respond to workplace changes. By entering into joint discussions on workplace needs, you'll learn more about the employer's long-term plans which, in turn, will help you anticipate your members' future needs.

Your joint planning efforts may also enable you to open discussions with the employer on the long-term plan itself. Working with management, you may develop a basis for the union to make its own recommendations on those plans, and together to arrive at mutually acceptable decisions on the future work environment.

On the negative side, confidentiality of classroom records may be more difficult to protect when the employer helps run the program. You'll want to be especially careful in establishing strict guarantees that records will stay in the classroom, away from the workplace and personnel files.

Define Your Governing Structure

To operate the program effectively – whether on your own or jointly – you'll need to establish a governing structure that's in touch with what your members need. If you share responsibility with the employer, we have urged you to take on an equal role in the decision-making process so that you can represent your

Participatory Planning in a Joint Program

Members of International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) Local 717 in Warren, Ohio, are helping their employer switch to more competitive and high tech production processes as part of a comprehensive job security and retraining program that includes both basic and technical skills. The learning program is part of a negotiated agreement between the IUE Local and the Packard Electric Division of General Motors.

The joint agreement established a top-level, labor-management Jobs Board that oversees hiring and training plans at Packard Electric's 19 Warren facilities. It also established 19 lower-level Plant Units, which determine specific training needs for their plants and appoint "joint design teams" to develop training programs.

Learning needs can be identified either from the top (Jobs Board) or bottom (Plant Units). But according to a case study by the Work in America Institute, "Wherever the initial idea comes from, it must go to the appropriate joint committee at the plant or divisional level for discussion and approval. If the idea is accepted, a design team is created to develop the curriculum and to stipulate the methods and technology necessary to meet the training need." This process ensures that learning activities are relevant to workers' real needs.

The joint planning process has altered traditional communication patterns between workers and management, according to the Work in America Institute. By giving workers a chance to voice their ideas on learning needs, "it has become obvious just how many smart people are employed at Packard Electric and how much they have to offer, once asked to participate."

members' interests. For instance, on the joint governing board, the union should serve at least in a co-chair capacity, and union members should make up at least 50% of the board.

At the operating level, a joint program should be overseen by co-directors from both labor and management. Alternatively, you might engage a professional administrator who is acceptable to both parties.

Regardless of who operates the program, you need to consider how you can encourage a "bottom-up" decision-making process, to ensure that the program remains responsive. A literacy program cannot be imposed arbitrarily by "top-down" management; it must be firmly grounded in the actual needs of your members. A challenge to the program's governing body will be to facilitate this participatory planning process.

Creating a Training Center to Operate the Program

The national agreement between the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Chrysler Corporation has created a separate entity, known as the National Training Center, to administer education and training programs negotiated under a 1985 memorandum of understanding on joint activities. The staff of the Detroit-based Center is drawn equally from the company and union. Its co-directors are designated respectively by labor and management.

Through the Center, the UAW and Chrysler develop and implement a wide variety of programs for Chrysler workers and their families. The Center provides guidance to plant-level Local Joint Training Committees and assists them in establishing programs. The Center also operates some 20 national demonstration programs.

Planning and oversight of local programs are the responsibility of the Local Joint Training Committees. Typical programs offer basic academic skills, high school equivalency, English as a second language, computers, and other job-related or personal skills.

The National Training Center serves as administrative agent for the UAW-Chrysler Joint Activities Board. That Board was created under a joint memorandum of understanding as the body responsible for all joint labor-management endeavors at the company.

The Auto Workers have established similar joint training program structures with General Motors, Ford Motor Company, and other employers.

Principles of Worker-Directed Training

The concept of participatory training is at the heart of the Career Development Institute established by the United Steelworkers of America through its collective bargaining agreements with major steel companies, such as Bethlehem, National, Inland, Armco, and LTV.

The Institute, with substantial monthly contributions amounting to roughly 10 cents an hour, is intended to provide broadly for steelworkers' education, training, and personal development. Its board, half union and half management, is responsible for selecting professional directors to oversee the program.

The language of the Career Development agreement with Bethlehem Steel exemplifies the strong support of worker-directed learning which each participating employer has endorsed:

> ". . . Workers must play a significant role in the design and development of their jobs, their training and education and their working environment.
>
> "Experience has shown that worker growth and development are stunted when programs are mandated from above but flourish in an atmosphere of voluntary participation in self-designed and self-directed training and education. These shared beliefs shall be the guiding principles [of the program]."

Step 5. Develop Links with the Education Community

Your workplace literacy program can create new connections between education providers and your members. To help your members get the most from those connections, you will probably need to "educate the educators" about your members' needs. Whether your program hires its own instructors or contracts with schools to run classes, the union should take the lead in designing the kinds of services your members want.

Explore Local Educational Resources

To teach your classes, your union generally has two options:

- hire your own teachers
- contract with educational institutions

Either way, your union has a chance to establish new relationships between your members and local education providers. Those relationships can increase workers' access to education and training services. They can also make the education agencies better informed about your members' needs.

Explore your area's education resources:

- public and private post-secondary institutions, including two-year and four-year colleges and universities
- vocational-technical institutions operated under the state education system
- the adult basic education program run by the public schools
- the GED (General Educational Development) program that provides high school equivalency diplomas in cooperation with the state education agency
- nontraditional providers of adult education and training, such as community-based organizations or job training agencies

Undoubtedly, many of these schools and agencies are ones you've worked with before, either in earlier educational programs for your members or in other community activities. Your union can build on these relationships in exploring new linkages to support your workplace literacy program as well as broader educational efforts.

Look for instructors who aren't bound by traditional school-based approaches to adult education. They should be comfortable with a teaching approach that focuses on working adults. They must be flexible in adapting instruction to adults' varied learning styles. Above all, they must be sensitive to your union's needs and objectives.

Some unions have found public higher education institutions to be especially responsive in tailoring programs for adult union members. A union-based program can be a natural extension of their own educational mission, which focuses exclusively on serving adults.

When you hire an educational institution, you'll also want to keep in mind the provisions of the collective bargaining agreements that are in effect at the school.

Make Your Union's Needs Clear

Although you enlist the schools' assistance in designing and teaching your program, the union should lead and direct it. You will need to tell educators clearly what you and your members want from them. If you don't, learners may be quickly turned off by more traditional classroom approaches. When you pay for educational services, you have the opportunity to work with the school or agency to custom-design those services. The program should meet your members' needs. Since you're paying for the service, you have a right to shop around until you find what you're looking for.

As the purchaser of educational services, you must have an opportunity to review the school's performance in carrying out the program. If you and your members are not satisfied, the school will have to work with you to correct problems.

There are a variety of ways to make a union presence evident throughout the program. Union officers or staff can welcome learners at the opening of the program as well as speak at graduation. Union staff can serve as counselors and visit classes regularly to assist workers

Working with the State Voc-Tech System

The Wisconsin State AFL-CIO has established an ongoing relationship with the state's vocational-technical schools to provide work-based education and training for workers in cities throughout the state.

The State Federation serves as an intermediary between the voc-tech system and the unions and employers at specific worksites, helping develop customized programs. The voc-tech schools bring these classes right to union halls and worksites.

An assortment of federal, state, and local workplace literacy funds are tapped for this statewide program. Although monies are administered by the state vocational technical adult education board, the staff includes State AFL-CIO representatives. The number of projects they've established is close to 40.

The program's technical assistance has been especially beneficial to smaller local unions who might not otherwise have had the resources to develop educational services for their members.

with questions or problems. Union counselors can conduct special group discussions on study skills. Finally, qualified union staff or union members may be able to conduct some of the classes. These activities reinforce the program's identity as one that's accountable to the workers themselves.

By getting more involved in local education in your area, you may be able to help local educational institutions become more responsive to your members' needs. You'll also have an opportunity to make them more aware of the labor movement's educational goals. One way to do this is to serve on the boards of community colleges or other higher education institutions in your area. You might also encourage local colleges or universities to establish a union advisory board like that at the City University of New York, with members from labor and the university, to advise on workers' needs. A union advisory committee will enable the school to give a worker-oriented focus to any of its programs that are geared to employed adults.

Select Responsive Instructors

Some unions actively interview and select instructors. Others leave that function to the cooperating educational institution but retain the right to make the final selection. You have the right to evaluate instructors to make sure they meet your criteria for worker-centered learning.

Instructors at the traditional adult basic education institutions – the public schools and community colleges – may not be very experienced with non-school-based education. You should seek out those who are willing to work with your union to develop the kind of instruction you want. They should also be sympathetic to the program's broader goals, such as educating workers in the areas of family and civic responsibilities. Don't overlook teachers who have backgrounds in community-based organizations, such as job training agencies, where they have had experience with non-school-based adult education. (See the box on the next page, "Criteria for Choosing Instructors.")

Since few colleges and universities have specialized in preparing teachers to work with adult learners, you may have difficulty identifying adult educators who have all the attributes you're seeking. That's why teacher training is important. To help educators fulfill the role your union envisions, three kinds of instructor training are important, according to staff at Eastern Michigan University who helped design UAW-Ford worker education services:

- joint discussions with learners before starting the program, to hear their expectations
- orientation to the work situation, including plant culture and labor history
- in-service training on learner-centered instructional techniques as well as specific content areas

You may also want to design training for union members who will function as mentors or peer counselors. Their role in the program will be to offer support to learners as well as to strengthen the teaching staff's understanding of workers' needs. In the Worker Education Program operated by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union in New York City, for example, learners elect a fellow student as their delegate. The delegate orients new learners, handles attendance problems, and works with teachers to plan topics for class discussion.

Some programs use volunteer tutors to supplement professional teaching staff. Local organizations affiliated with national volunteer groups, such as Literacy Volunteers of America, can advise you on training volunteers.

Criteria for Choosing Instructors

These criteria can help you identify instructors whose teaching approach would support your union's objective of a worker-centered classroom.

- Are the instructors experienced in teaching basic skills to adults?
- Do they have experience with a nontraditional approach to adult education – using teaching materials and curricula that aren't school-based?
- Have they actually taught in a non-school setting, such as a union hall or a workplace? (It may be hard to find instructors who have that kind of experience.)
- Are they sensitive to workers' needs and concerns as learners, including an understanding of the skills workers use in their jobs and in their personal lives?
- Are they union members? How knowledgable are they about unions?
- How well do they know the industry and jobs in which your members work?
- Are they comfortable using a variety of teaching approaches to meet the different learning styles of different individuals?
- Are they aware of and sensitive to cultural differences that may exist among your members?
- Are they flexible and willing to cooperate with the union in shaping the curriculum?
- Will they approach learners as equals in a collaborative learning process?

Pursuing Individual Interests in Education

Members of the Steelworkers union at Ohio Steel Tube, Shelby, Ohio, can nominate courses they'd like to take under the education program offered through their Labor Management Participation Team (LMPT). In subjects where the most interest is shown, courses are then developed with local technical schools and universities, tailored strictly for employees of the company.

These so-called self-interest courses have covered computers, home construction projects, and how small engines operate, among other subjects. They're open to salaried as well as union workers, and all tuition and book costs are picked up by the joint education fund. About one third of Ohio Steel Tube's workers have taken advantage of the program, according to union estimates.

Since the LMPT was established in 1982, its educational subcommittee has also created a higher education reimbursement program as well as a special GED course open only to company workers. Although older adults are often self-conscious about going back to school for a GED, these workers have enjoyed attending classes with their peers. The result has been an unusually high GED completion rate of 79%.

Step 6. Outline a Plan of Services

The specific services that your program offers should reflect the needs, priorities, and resources you've identified, as well as the roles that your union and others, such as schools and employers, have chosen. Taking these needs, priorities, resources, and roles into account, you should develop a plan indicating what the program will do, how it will do it, and what it will cost.

State Your Program's Goals

Assuming you've followed the other steps, you've already identified your members' needs. You've put wheels in motion on funding negotiations, and you've begun to work out cooperative roles with management and the education community. Now you must plan specifics.

As a first step, you should have a clear statement of your program goals. This statement of goals, or mission statement, provides a crucial framework for the program.

The mission statement will guide you in your planning. It can also be used when you explain the program to your members and encourage them to participate (as discussed in Step 8, "Encourage Your Members to Participate").

If you were able to reach agreement with a signatory employer through contract language or a separate letter of intent (see Step 1, "Lay the Groundwork"), these may provide a good statement of your goals.

Translate Your Goals into a Program

Getting even more specific, now you should take your general statement of goals and flesh it out with a plan of specific services for accomplishing those goals. The plan of services should show what education and training you'll provide and how those services will be carried out: with what staff, instructors, and other resources.

To further develop your plan, you'll need to make basic decisions on education and training issues. What classes will you offer? Who will teach the classes? How will participants get the supportive services they need? How many workers can you initially serve? How much will all this cost? How will you evaluate the results?

You also need to make decisions about the program's administrative and management structure. Who will run the program? How will staff be selected? Who will oversee the program and make sure it is accountable to the union and its members?

One Union's Mission Statement

Every union should set its own goals and objectives, appropriate to its members' needs. The following box shows how the Bricklayers and Allied Crafts (BAC) Education Program stated its mission.

The BAC Education Program is built on the premise that the BAC member is at one and the same time both the reason for which the union exists and the union's most important resource.

The mission of the BAC Education Program is to help BAC members and their families gain a greater understanding of the world in which we live and how it affects us as working people.

The general objective of the BAC Education Program is to help the union grow stronger and more capable. The program's specific objectives are to:

- enhance union leadership capabilities through skill building and learning;
- improve communication among the leadership and rank and file members about the union;
- foster an understanding of labor's role in society and the economy;
- encourage brotherhood and sisterhood in the union;
- reinforce membership pride in craft and appreciation of excellence in construction design and workmanship;
- stimulate awareness of education as a lifelong process;
- provide opportunities to develop literacy and mathematical skills which can serve as the basis for further education; and
- support organizing and the growth of the union.

Talking to other unions that have run workplace literacy programs can help you define your own plans. (As we've said, we mention many of these unions in this guide.) Also helpful will be some of the general publications on planning or administering adult education programs, since they cover typical planning issues that are outside our focus here. Guides published by the Business Council for Effective Literacy, the National Adult Literacy Project, and others explore topics that are common to all adult education programs, such as program planning, budgeting, financial management, and staff structure. (A number of these publications are listed and described in Appendix C, "Useful Books and Articles.")

Decide What Services You'll Provide

Here are some questions to help you decide how to structure the program.

- **What kinds of services do you need in order to accomplish your stated objectives?** Plan what types of education and training activities you'll offer, as well as appropriate support services, such as educational counseling, social service referrals, and the like.

- **What subject areas will classes cover?** Remember, your goal will be to tailor course offerings to your members' identified needs and interests. Further, the curriculum for each course should be appropriate for adult learners (as discussed further in Step 7, "Design the Worker-Centered Classroom").

- **What related activities will your program address?** Education and training may be just part of the answer. For example, labor and management should consider revising the written materials used in the workplace if the current versions are confusing and unclear. Your program creates an opportunity to deal with those issues.

- **How many workers can you initially serve?** Often it's impractical to try to serve all interested workers at once. Not only do limited resources make enrollment limits unavoidable, but it's important to keep classes to a manageable size. In these circumstances, you should strive to make sure your members understand that no one will be left out. Your plan of services should include a timetable for their participation, so they'll know everyone can participate eventually. (See Step 8, "Encourage Your Members to Participate.") If you have a significant demand for English as a second language, it's especially important to develop balanced programs broad enough to serve a wide range of education needs.

- **When and where will classes be held?** The best location is one that's accessible to workers at the times they're free to participate. Your union hall is often the ideal site. However, some unions, such as the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York, conduct classes at the jobsite to make them as convenient as possible for their members. AFSCME District Council 37 gives workers a choice of locations, recognizing that some learners prefer a classroom away from the jobsite where they have privacy from supervisors and their immediate co-workers.

- **How will you involve learners in decisions about their education?** You'll want each learner to develop his or her own learning plan, with assistance from counselors or instructors. The individual learning plan will give your members a chance to define their personal goals and map out how to achieve them. The plan can help you place workers in the kinds of education and training activities most suited to their goals.

List What Your Outcomes Will Be

What results do you want to see from the program? Broadly, you'll need to set targets for how many people will participate, how long they'll be enrolled, and how many people will complete specified courses or hours of instruction. You may express some of your goals as measurable educational gains, such as increased competencies in reading, math, or consumer skills. One outcome may be the number of people who meet the goals they established in their individual learning plans.

You can also aim for more subjective outcomes, such as increased self-esteem and increased confidence in using basic skills in real-life situations. Increased networking among learners can be another kind of outcome.

Design your curriculum to help achieve the results you're seeking. For example, a series of incremental learning steps can build up to each desired outcome.

You'll also need to consider how the union will evaluate results (as discussed in Step 9, "Keep Your Program on Track").

Draw Up Operational Plans

How will the program be administered? All staff should be sensitive to workers and their needs. The union can play an important role in recruiting and training staff. Everyone employed by the program should get special orientation on the particular needs of your members. An advantage of tapping your union's membership for staff and instructors is that they are likely to be familiar with these needs already.

What should you look for in a director? To serve as director, you'll probably want someone who knows the labor movement and the industry in which your members work. Many unions have found that a teaching background is ideal but not absolutely essential; more important is an understanding of what the union and its members seek to achieve through a workplace education or literacy program.

The director should also be someone who has the confidence of the workers to be served. For this reason, in a joint labor-management program, it may be appropriate for the union to select the staff director. At a minimum, the selection should be a joint decision. As we've seen, some jointly operated programs have co-directors.

Crucial to protecting the integrity of your program will be sound financial management and recordkeeping practices. It's also important to be fully familiar with the rules and regulations for any federal or state funds used to support the program, in order to avoid potential liability for disallowed costs.

You'll need to make budget estimates for the activities and staff you're planning. Your budget plan should show all the costs you expect to incur as well as the projected timeframe for each phase of the program, so you can figure out the total financial commitment you'll need. Included in your budget should be any non-financial resources, such as donated facilities, equipment, or staff time.

Step 7. Design the Worker-Centered Classroom

Your union-designed classroom may bear little resemblance to the typical adult education classroom. Instead, classes can be made to order for your members. Your instructors should actively involve workers in directing their own education, offer them varied approaches to learning, and respect their individual differences. Workers can make their greatest gains when they learn literacy skills in a "real-life context" – that is, when they can see how skills are used in their own life situations, both on and off the job.

Shape the Classroom to Your Members' Needs

In creating a positive classroom environment, your goal should be to develop a classroom that's been designed to meet your members' distinct needs. Who better to take the lead in designing such a classroom than the union itself?

Your union knows its members, the work they do, and their concerns both on and off the job. While you may hire experienced instructors or purchase educational services from the schools (as discussed in Step 5, "Develop Links with the Education Community"), you will want to work closely with the educators in structuring classroom activities and developing course materials to come up with the best program for your members.

Think about the way you work with your union's lawyer or accountant. They, like the educators, can advise you. But the union must still make final decisions based on your knowledge of your members' situation.

Your union may want to develop its own instructional plans and, in some cases, put together its own curriculum materials. You may also need to train the instructors who will use them.

When your program's objective is to help your members earn academic credit or job certification credentials, you'll need to work with educational institutions or industry certification boards to ensure that the courses you design meet established education or training standards.

Help Workers Take Control of Learning

We prefer to think of the classroom as a place of *learning* rather than *training*. Learning implies an active role for the student, while training implies a passive one. Why that difference is significant was aptly stated by employment experts at the Work in America Institute, in their book, *Training – The Competitive Edge*:

> "The shift from 'training' to 'learning' is more than semantic. Training puts the emphasis on what someone does to the employees. . . . Learning implies that employees actively participate in expanding their own skills."

But regardless of whether it's called learning, training, or education, the active participation of learners should be central to your union's literacy program. Research supports the view that when adults are in control of their learning, they learn more effectively. Their active participation also promotes the growth of personal awareness and social skills that help individuals function more effectively in a variety of settings. Participatory learning fosters self-esteem and empowers adults to take greater responsibility for their lives. This is the kind of learning that a worker-centered program seeks to encourage.

Develop Individual Learning Plans

Your members' participation in planning their education begins with the design of the program itself. They voice their needs and interests through the needs assessment process, and through their union, they have an opportunity to participate in developing and operating a program to fulfill those needs.

One of the most important ways you can help your members take responsibility for their education is through their individual learning plans. The individual plan is something learners should develop jointly with their instructors or counselors when they enter your program. It will briefly outline the worker's own learning goals and show how he or she proposes to achieve them.

The learning plan can be the basis for services the worker receives in the

Levels of Learner Participation

Level 4: Learners have greater degrees of control, responsibility, and reward for program activities

Level 3: Learners are consulted for some input into the instructional and management process

Level 2: Learners cooperate with the rules, activities, and procedures developed by program staff

Level 1: Learners are present in the program

(Adapted from Paul Jurmo, Business Council for Effective Literacy, in *Participatory Literacy Education*, 1989.)

A Comparison

Participatory Learning	Passive Learning
• learn by understanding	• learn by repetition
• discuss ideas	• memorize facts
• help develop learning plan	• follow pre-set curriculum
• develop self-awareness	• accept classroom rules
• examine social issues	• accept status quo

literacy program. The plan may also address auxiliary needs: supportive services, occupational skills training, and the like. Recognizing that learning continues throughout adulthood, the plan can help your members set immediate as well as longer term learning goals. It can assist them in formulating plans for further education in the future, for example, at a local community college or technical school.

Each individual's plan should contain interim goals for measuring progress during the course of the program. Your members' instructors or educational counselors can use those goals to help learners diagnose problem areas and to recognize their accomplishments as they master new skills.

You should treat the plan as a living document that learners can revise and update as their needs change.

A Curriculum for Ongoing Education

Evening basic skills classes are a stepping stone to further education and better jobs for many members of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union in New York. These workers are participants in a jointly negotiated education program operated since 1976 by the Amalgamated Service and Allied Industries Joint Board with their signatory employees.

Looking at learning as a continuum, the program encourages workers to set their sights high. Those who start with few reading skills can get help with basic literacy or English as a second language, in classes provided by the program. They can continue toward a high school equivalency (GED). Some have gone on from the program to higher education, with help from the scholarship fund which is negotiated as part of ACTWU's multi-employer contract.

With their new skills, many workers have qualified for advancement, and some have changed careers. The union reports that one member started in the literacy program, got her GED, and subsequently went into a college nursing program where she received a nursing degree. Two-thirds of the workers who have taken adult literacy classes now have their GEDs.

Teach for the Way Adults Learn

Because many adults are motivated to improve their literacy skills to solve problems and complete tasks, they learn those skills best when they're taught in the context of their own lives or jobs. They get more out of what they learn when they can use their new skills immediately in the real world. If they learn in this way, they not only learn more, they retain it longer.

Teaching that integrates basic educational skills with life skills is known as "functional context" instruction. Functional context education is gaining popularity among employers and the military, who use it to teach basic skills as they're used in the workplace. Researchers claim that for people who have mid-level reading skills, the approach is more effective than traditional adult education as a way to learn new skills for changing jobs.

What you should avoid, though, are literacy programs that are narrowly constructed just for specific jobs. Such a program clearly fails to broaden your members' skills beyond the specific requirements of that job and limits learners to immediate and short-term goals.

Teaching new skills in the context of your members' lives and jobs means your curriculum must build on what your members know. We've paraphrased guidelines suggested by the Work in America Institute in *Training—The Competitive Edge*, to show how you can put learning in a functional context that's relevant to your members' lives:

1. Help your members understand what they are to learn and why.
2. Build on the skills and knowledge they already possess (basic academic skills, job skills, and life skills).
3. Develop new lessons that build on lessons they have already learned.
4. Integrate literacy skills instruction into technical training or broader academic education.
5. Set learning objectives that relate to workers' jobs and lives.
6. Incorporate tasks, materials, and procedures that workers actually use into the course wherever feasible.

Teaching Percentages in a Real-Life Context

Here are examples of how math problems can be understood in different settings.

Job Context

The directions on a bottle of cleaning liquid tell you to mix the liquid in a 20% solution with water (20% cleaning liquid and the rest water). If your bucket will hold five gallons, how much cleaning liquid should you measure into it? How much water?

Classroom materials: Directions on label from cleaning liquid

Union Context

Mary's base pay is now $400 a week. Her union has asked for a 5% general wage increase, and management has made a counteroffer of 3%. How would the two different proposals affect her weekly wage?

Classroom materials: Paycheck stubs, bargaining agreement

(box continued on next page)

Teaching Percentages in a Real-Life Context (continued)

Consumer Context

The local clothing store is advertising a 20% discount on men's shirts. How much will you save on a shirt that's regularly priced at $20.00? What will be the sale price of the shirt? If another store advertises the same shirt for $17.99, which store has the better price?

Classroom materials: Newspaper ads

Citizenship Context

In the last election, the bond issue for building a new school was approved by a narrow margin, with 51% of the voters for and 49% against. A total of 12,500 votes were cast. How many people voted in favor of the school construction? What would the outcome have been if 5% of these "yes" voters had stayed home?

Classroom materials: Newspaper articles on the voting results

Home and Family Context

A recipe for 48 cookies calls for 2 cups of flour. But you only want to make 36 cookies. What percentage of the original recipe will you make? How much flour will you need for 36 cookies?

Classroom materials: Cookie recipe, measuring cup

Preparing for Occupational Tests

Local 237 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in New York is among the unions that have offered their members preparatory courses for civil service tests or occupational certification exams. Teamster trainees know that when they complete the program they will be prepared to take a test to qualify for jobs at higher wages – such as elevator mechanics, building superintendents, exterminators, and mason's helpers.

The prospect of good jobs motivates these learners, and their retention in the learning program is high, according to outside evaluators.

Get Workers' Ideas on the Curriculum

Your workplace literacy curriculum may be built around practical problems that interest adult workers and provoke discussion, such as

- applying for a job,
- getting to work,
- finding child care,
- solving difficulties in the workplace,
- learning to use new equipment on the job,
- understanding the benefits of union membership, and
- following current events in the community.

You may also devote time to specific job skills, such as preparing for a qualifying exam or handling high-tech equipment.

Workers can contribute a great deal to planning the curriculum. Your instructors should visit the worksite to confer with experienced workers and to learn more about their jobs. They should listen to workers describe their goals.

Workers can furnish the instructors with copies of the actual written materials they use in their jobs, as well as materials used in higher level jobs for which they hope to qualify. Workers can also show instructors other kinds of work-related materials they use – their union contract, their employee benefits manual, and the like. It is important to incorporate as many of these materials as possible into the curriculum. (See the box, "Sources of Teaching Materials.")

Supervisors who know your members can be an additional source of curriculum ideas, especially when you're planning to cover occupational skills along with literacy skills. You might also consider using teaching materials that are specific to the occupations and skills in your industry, which may be available from the employer's training staff.

You can develop a curriculum plan and instructional materials by combining these discussions and materials with what you found out earlier from your needs assessment and the employer training inventory (see Step 2, "Identify Your Members' Needs and Goals").

Whenever possible, test any newly designed curriculum with a limited number of learners before it's put into general use. As it's used, you should review and assess it continuously and change it as appropriate to meet learners' needs.

Use Computers Where They're Appropriate

The computer is no substitute for a good teacher, but good computer-assisted instruction can help good teachers work more effectively with adult learners, especially in a large class of individuals who have many different levels of skills. If you use computers, though, don't use them exclusively. It's important to build in time for class discussion as well so workers can enjoy the full benefits of learning as part of a small group.

As with any instructional materials you'd use in your program, computerized learning programs can be useful when they support worker learning objectives. First, learning can be individually paced. Students can spend as much time as necessary on difficult lessons and skip quickly through material that comes easily. Second, the computer provides rapid feedback to learners. Students find out quickly when they're wrong and can seek further help.

Many computerized learning programs include pre- and post-tests so learners and their instructors can check their progress and diagnose problems. Yet privacy from classmates is maintained because the computer communicates test results directly to the learner.

Another plus for computer-assisted instruction is that it exposes learners to new technology. Workers who may feel threatened by the introduction of computers in their jobs can become familiar with them in a less threatening setting.

Choose Software That's Right for Your Members

Before your program buys a computer-based instructional system, you'll need to consider curriculum content, software design, and hardware requirements.

You may want to refer to the criteria for evaluating these three areas that were developed by G. Mike Charleston and others at the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy at Pennsylvania State University, under a grant from the National Commission for Employment Policy. (See Appendix C, "Useful Books and Articles.")

If you can afford a substantial investment for customized software, your union can actually design its own instructional software. "Authoring" programs simplify the writing of instructional software. You may want to explore the possibilities of customized software as lower cost authoring programs become more widely available.

Another innovation in programmed instruction is the interactive video disc. With this method, equipment that resembles a compact disc player with a TV screen allows learners to see and hear their lessons. The interactive video disc gives learners freedom to structure their own lesson plans and to choose which portions of the instructional program they want to cover and in what order. Costs may be prohibitive, though.

Despite its many attractions, computerized instruction isn't always advisable. Most software that teaches literacy skills is aimed at youngsters and isn't suitable for adult learners. Moreover, it's hard to find basic skills software presented in a functional context that's appropriate for adult workers. And software can also be expensive.

Never buy computers and learning software until your program has clearly defined its instructional goals. Then teachers and learners should take part in selecting the instructional software that

Sources of Teaching Materials

The environment of workers' everyday lives supplies a wide variety of practical teaching materials. These materials build on workers' prior knowledge and provide a context for new reading and computational skills.

Workplace

- Employee manuals
- Equipment operating instructions
- Health insurance handbooks
- Inventory sheets
- Job application forms
- Job descriptions
- Paycheck stubs
- Price lists
- Safety notices

Union

- Union constitution
- Union contract
- Union newsletter

Consumerism

- Ads for consumer goods and services (groceries, autos, bank loans, etc.)
- Income tax forms
- Insurance forms
- Leases
- Medicaid application forms
- Utility or phone company bills
- Warranties

Citizenship

- Ballots
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Voter registration forms

Home and Family

- Bus schedules
- Children's bedtime stories
- Menus
- Recipes
- Telephone books

will help them meet their educational needs. After the teaching software has been chosen, then you can select the hardware to run it. Good training is essential to help staff get full use out of the products.

Before you buy anything, try to observe the specific computer learning products in use and insist on a trial period before buying. We urge you to consult with other labor organizations on their experiences with specific software and hardware.

Create a Supportive Learning Environment

In the worker-centered classroom, learning takes place in a way that preserves the worker's dignity and sense of self-worth. This may seem to go without saying, but it is worth reiterating, particularly when well-intentioned programs fall short of this goal.

Workers should have positive feelings about their program, confidence about their participation in it, and pride in their accomplishments. This can't happen when they are stigmatized by participating—when they are exposed as "illiterates" or when the threat of firing or demotion hangs over them if they don't learn enough.

Unions have seen their members respond positively to basic skills instruction when the instruction is linked to academic or occupational skills that they can use in their personal lives or jobs. "Worker education," "skill upgrading," and "certification prep" classes help workers feel good about learning; "literacy" and "remedial education" classes don't.

Mixing Computers and Group Instruction

In the Labor Immigrant Assistance Project (LIAP) sponsored by the Los Angeles Federation of Labor, individualized computer learning plays off against group activities to provide a better rounded literacy program for non-English-speakers. At LIAP's Labor Learning Center, learners can focus on individually paced, computer-assisted instruction in English as a second language, citizenship, and basic skills. Classroom activities, by contrast, are usually conducted in groups and focus on experiential activities, relating learning to students' lives.

In the classroom, learners gain a feeling of community with one another, according to the LIAP "ESL/Civics Program Curriculum Summary," published by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. The computer learning center helps learners pursue individualized academic study.

The two approaches complement each other in achieving two of the curriculum's objectives: empowering individual learners and establishing a sense of group unity.

Moreover, the learning environment must be supportive of cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity. Insensitivity to minority points of view will undermine learning, as will culturally biased course materials and tests. Rather than penalizing some learners because their life experiences have been different from the majority, the program must provide opportunities to bring those varied perspectives into the classroom so that everyone can learn from them.

When learners have an opportunity to help plan the program and contribute their points of view, the risk of inadvertently alienating them is considerably lessened.

> *Most of the people alleged to be functionally illiterate neither are nor consider themselves to be so. . . . Branding midlevel literates as functionally illiterate not only slanders them – it stacks the cards against them.*
>
> *– From work by Thomas Sticht in* Training – The Competitive Edge, *1988*

Step 8. Encourage Your Members to Participate

A union, as a democratic institution, strives to serve all its members equally. The same must be true for your program. Make the program fully accessible to your members, and try to ensure that participation is voluntary. Confidentiality of classroom records is essential so your members can feel comfortable about enrolling. Outreach and counseling by union staff will help workers get the most they can from the program.

Ensure Access to the Program

As a union leader, you can work to ensure that your members have full and fair access to workplace-based education and training programs. You can see to it that eligibility doesn't favor people who work certain jobs or shifts or those who have certain test scores. The program can't be limited, even inadvertently, to workers of a certain sex, race, or age. Instead, every worker who has an interest in learning should be encouraged to attend. The principle of equal access to learning needs to be a tenet of your program. This means ensuring equal opportunity not only for the learning program itself, but also for any job advancement opportunities that may result.

You can actively help your members overcome their fears about participating. Many adults are apprehensive about failure in the classroom, and that anxiety is magnified in situations in which they feel their jobs are on the line. Adults can also feel ashamed or embarrassed to admit they need help. Through union counselors or stewards, you can take the stigma out of learning and make workers feel comfortable about signing up for this union-sponsored program.

Give Workers the Choice to Participate

Participation in your workplace literacy program should be voluntary; it should also be a private decision.

Compulsory attendance requirements can severely undermine the effectiveness of a workplace literacy program. Learning is not like a chemical reaction that ignites automatically when you assemble the right ingredients. People must *choose* to learn. That's because learning requires individuals to exert an active effort. Learning stands little chance in a "shotgun" program where workers are told to participate or lose their jobs.

Rather than requiring attendance, you should create positive incentives for workers to enter the program, and remove potential obstacles as well.

Ways of Making the Program Accessible

These approaches can help you ensure that your literacy program is accessible.

- Get out information about the program to all segments of your membership. Show them how the program can serve their needs. Specially targeted recruitment can help you attract a cross-section of your membership.
- Create a learning environment that reflects the needs, interests, and skill levels of workers from all segments of the workforce. Whenever feasible, offer instruction at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. This prevents "creaming" (helping only those with the best skills), yet recognizes the needs of workers at various skill levels.
- Develop a timetable for enrolling and use waiting lists if necessary, so everyone who wants to participate can be included in the program.
- Incorporate other union benefits into the program to support participation. For example, union-sponsored social services may make it possible for some members to attend the program.
- Hold classes in locations that are convenient to everyone. Many unions establish a single learning center at the union hall or other nearby site. If your membership is scattered, you may have to use several locations, such as schools, libraries, or churches that are near workers' jobs or homes. Access to public transportation is important and you need to tailor classroom hours to workers' schedules.
- Help parents make child care arrangements. Some union-operated programs provide supervised child care at the learning center itself. Others help parents obtain services from nearby community organizations.
- Minimize the cost to participants. Don't pass operating costs through to the learners, and keep the cost of books and materials to a minimum.
- Train union members as mentors or peer counselors. They can help take the fear out of enrolling, as well as solve attendance or motivational problems that may arise.

Release-Time Versus After-Hours Classes

As an incentive to participate in workplace literacy programs, some unions arrange for employers to offer release time from work, often with pay, so workers can attend classes on company time. This is seen as an advantage for workers who have limited free time after hours. It also seems an appropriate expression of an employer's responsibility for the training and development of staff. If managers get release time, shouldn't other employees get it as well?

Yet other unions express concern that a release-time program can sacrifice learners' privacy, since their employer usually requires an attendance report. These unions feel the loss of privacy outweighs any advantages of paid learning time. Therefore, they prefer holding classes after hours. Similarly, some unions fear that workers' broader educational interests are often shortchanged in favor of job-specific training when they attend class on company time.

A third approach is the training bonus, such as the one developed by Local 32 of the Food and Beverage Workers (an affiliate of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union) in Washington, D.C. The union and food service employers agreed to pay cafeteria workers a bonus when they complete an after-hours education program. This program gives workers a choice: tell the employer they are enrolling so they can receive the bonus, or attend without telling the employer and simply forgo the financial incentive to maintain their privacy.

Know the Law About Mandatory Programs

In some cases, workers are protected against mandatory requirements for participation in workplace literacy programs. If you are working with an employer who is unwilling to accept voluntary enrollment, your union may wish to obtain legal advice on those protections.

When an employer makes performance in a literacy program a precondition for hiring, promotion, job retention, or demotion, then Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 applies. The requirement to participate in the program must be scrutinized for any discriminatory effects. It must have no adverse impact on any group protected by Title VII (race, sex, national origin, or religion). If it does, the employer must show that its policy meets the Title VII criteria for job-relatedness and business necessity (as discussed in Step 2, "Identify Your Members' Needs and Goals," under the heading "Understand Legal Issues on Testing").

Employers are also prevented from setting unreasonable educational requirements for jobs. Court decisions require that educational criteria be job-related, according to a review of legal issues prepared by the Business Council for Effective Literacy (BCEL) and the American Bar Association Literacy Task Force. For example, a high school graduation requirement has been ruled illegal for production, maintenance, and apprentice positions when the requirement has a discriminatory effect on protected groups.

Mandatory after-hours participation in an education or training program may fall under the overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). If the employer is covered by FLSA, and if the workers meet the legal definition of a non-exempt employee, then the employer must observe FLSA requirements for minimum wage and maximum hours of work, according to the BCEL. State and local wage and hour laws may also apply.

Employers don't have to pay workers while they participate in a program if the program meets four conditions set by the U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, BCEL reports. The four conditions are:

1. The program is held outside of regular working hours.
2. The program is not directly related to the worker's existing job (for example, the program may prepare the worker for advancement to a different job).
3. The employee performs no productive work while attending.
4. Attendance is voluntary and the employee does not think that non-participation would hurt his or her employment or advancement potential.

"Attendance is not considered voluntary if the employee is 'given to understand or led to believe' that his or her present working conditions or continued employment would be adversely affected," according to BCEL.

Employers *do* have to pay workers when attendance is required. However, FLSA (amended in 1989) no longer requires overtime pay under some circumstances.

Straight-time pay is allowed for up to 10 hours of class beyond the 40-hour work-week when **all** these conditions are met:

- Attendance in the class is required.
- The class offers basic skills education for workers who lack a high school diploma or are performing at less than an eighth grade level.
- The class doesn't include job-specific training.

Overtime pay is required under **either** of these conditions:

- A required basic skills class adds more than 10 hours to the 40-hour work-week.
- The class includes job-specific training.

11. Language proficiency includes linguistic (or grammatical) competence, socio-linguistic competence, and strategic competence.

linguistic, socio-linguistic and strategic competence

Grammatical accuracy (knowing what to say) is the result of both the process of language acquisition and direct and indirect teaching of grammatical forms.

Learners need to know which grammatical forms to use, with whom, and under what circumstances; this socio-linguistic knowledge is needed for learners to know how, when and where to say what they want to say.

Learners also need to be competent in the use of strategies which allow them to compensate for their problems with language or for breakdowns in communication, because they must communicate years before they master the language entirely.

12. Language proficiency pre-supposes different abilities for different people in different situations.

communicative and school skills

Using English to learn content matter is very different from the ability to use English for ordinary conversation; the ability to converse fluently and correctly in English does not mean that the learner can learn academic content in an all-English setting.

Curriculum organization must take into account the learner's basic goals: every day conversational skills, the development of academic content, or writing and reading for day to day purposes, for example.

13. Language development takes time. Assessment of language development cannot be made on the basis of a single test or tests.

time factors and evaluation

Language development is a process. It occurs over time. It must be assessed and measured over time.

Ongoing evaluations should contain multiple measures of proficiency, including tutor's observations, learning logs, writing samples, and notes on interaction in class.

tutors:
roles & responsibilities

Thank you for joining the Adult Academy Tutoring roster. We hope that you will enjoy tutoring. In order to clarify what we need from you, and for you to know what you can expect from us, we are asking you to consider the following to be your job description.

Your two largest obligations are to attend training workshops, and to tutor on a regular basis. We will discuss scheduling and logistical details before the end of the training session.

Tutors' responsibilities:

• attend training workshops:
-- learn from workshop leaders and from each other;
help, teach and support each other

• make adult education work for you and your learners:
-- help create a collaborative learning environment, both during the workshops tutoring sessions as well
-- adhere to a regular program structure and schedule
-- tutor at least 2 hours per week
-- choose a time, learner population and site that works for you.
-- develop materials with and for your learners
-- develop curriculum with your learners and with teachers whose learners you help

• provide feedback to learners, teachers and Adult Academy staff.

• consider helping to train new volunteers

Adult Academy staff are available to help you throughout the course of tutoring. Should you have scheduling problems, or concerns about your learners or the program in general, please contact us.

what tutors do: tutoring

Although the specific content might vary from learning center to learning centers, the tutor's role is to support learners by providing additional help and attention to learners in small groups or, in some cases, on a one-to-one basis. In addition to the actual tutoring work, tutors are also asked to document their sessions with learners.

what some tutors may want to do: socializing

Some tutors choose to spend additional time with their learners beyond the tutoring sessions. Some go to movies or social events together. Some have regular telephone conversations -- particularly with ESL learners who want to practice their speaking and listening skills. This extra time is **completely optional**, and beyond the scope of a tutor's commitment to the learners or the program. Tutors are in no way obliged to meet with learners beyond the tutoring sessions, nor should they feel obligated to extend themselves to unrealistic commitments of time or energy.

troubleshooting:
when learners need help beyond the classroom

Occasionally, learners confide in tutors about personal, financial, domestic problems. Tutors are not expected to act as social service providers. Should a learner ask for help, a tutor may offer to investigate appropriate service agencies through which the learner can find a solution to his or her problem. The Adult Academy does not recommend tutors or teachers taking on learners' problems. It is important to respect learners' privacy, and to assist in *directing* learners to appropriate agencies as the need arises. During the training sessions, tutors might wish to discuss potential problems in order to devise effective strategies for helping learners find solutions to particular problems when or if they arise.

keeping track of learner/tutor interaction

An important element of tutoring, particularly over a period of time, is keeping track of learners' activities and progress. Some tutors write up lengthy notes after each session; others jot down who was there, what they did and leave it at that. As you become more comfortable with the tutoring sessions and a certain rhythm develops, you'll notice patterns of interaction among learners and between learners and yourself. It's very useful to make note of these patterns as they occur, as well as other incidents and happenings during the sessions.

The Adult Academy provides very open-ended tutoring logs. (See sample on next page.). The logs give tutors a great deal of leeway in deciding what to note about a particular session. We ask that you fill in your log for each session, and use the section for ideas/comments/critiques at the end of each session to evaluate the session.

Lengthy responses to questions on the tutoring logs might not necessarily be written up every session, but can be helpful in framing your thoughts about your work with you learners, should you choose to keep your own teaching journal.

4 tutors: roles and responsibilities 4

ADULT ACADEMY TUTOR'S LOG

LEARNERS:

TUTOR:

DATE/TIME/SITE:

GOALS:

MATERIALS:

ACTIVITIES:

COMMENTS:

COMMENTS:

COMMENTS:

OUT OF CLASS ACTIVITIES:

LEARNERS' RESPONSES:

TUTOR'S EVALUATION/IDEAS:

THIS FORM HAS BEEN ADAPTED FROM ONE PRODUCED BY ALBSU.

Gross/91 Adult Academy

learning about your learners

You might start to notice, and keep track of not only specific materials used by your learners, but also, who begins to bring in outside reading/writing materials to work on in class?

Who is interacting with whom? Is one learner usually particularly withdrawn? Outspoken?

Are people tired? Would it be helpful to bring juice and/or snacks to the sessions? Do learners respond well to a certain activity? Do they resist writing? Is someone copying everything that's written on the board into their notebook?

Is someone else trying to help other learners? Are other learners asking you for help all the time? Do they sometimes ask each other?

As you become increasingly aware of who your learners are, how they learn and interact with each other, you'll most likely develop a kind of short hand -- some way to keep track of what goes on during each session. You may not have time to write down everything in complete sentences -- brief notes on your worksheets, or in a notebook can be jotted down onto the tutor's log at the end of the session.

There are several purposes for keeping tutor logs:

1) to help you (and the teacher you assist, if any) to know what's going on with the learner over time;

2) to help you keep track of questions you might have about learners' progress;

3) to help you keep track of materials learners have used, approaches that don't work well and those that do;

4) to help you keep track of **your own** progress with tutoring sessions -- to note how you come to feel more comfortable, more confident as well as to note problem areas and questions you might have about tutoring;

5) to provide documentation to program funders that tutors and learners do meet, with what frequency and for what length of time.

Additionally, you may want to explore the potential for involving learners in evaluation of their own progress and in deciding future directions of study. (For example, a learner might look at the log and realize that s/he has done a good deal of work on one topic, and might decide to move to another; or realizes that s/he has gained a large list of sight words, and might want to work on writing sentences using these words, etc.).

questions for reflection:

These are questions which you might ask yourself now, and return to periodically. These questions reflect ongoing concerns and issues in every learning/teaching interaction.

- Who are you working with?
- What do you have in common with your learners? How are you different?
- What are learners' strengths and goals?
- What interactive/cooperative activities help to meet these goals?
- What stands out about tutoring -- is most enjoyable, unexpected, difficult, etc.?
- What questions do you have?

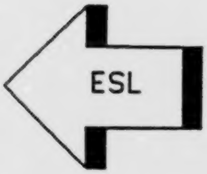
- Where can you go to find some answers?

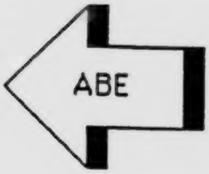
approaches and activities

In this section, we catalogue a wide range of approaches and activities that are widely used with adult literacy learners. Some are well known, and others have come to us from individual teachers and colleagues. Those methods that we have touched on in other sections, such as the language experience approach, are covered here in detail. Where appropriate, we have included visual examples. We suggest you read this section briefly at first to become familiar with the variety of activities you might use, and refer to it frequently as you plan actual tutoring sessions.

The methods, approaches and activities that literacy tutors use are like tools that people keep at home under the sink or in a toolbox. You will gain experience with these activities as you work with your learners. You will find yourself adapting and expanding many of the activities to meet the needs of your learners. You can incorporate these activities into literacy learning for native speakers of English as well as for ESL/literacy learners. They are designed to be used within an ongoing learning sequence. You can use and combine activities as students' needs and interests dictate.

Many learners need to develop skills in different areas; some may be stronger readers than writers, others may need help developing their understanding of English. These approaches and activities may help you to create different kinds of interaction to help learners with differing learning styles. They work well in multi-level literacy settings, and within the context of multiple topics. Brief descriptions are given for each heading, followed by examples. They are listed alphabetically on the following page. We have indicated their suitability for ABE or ESL, but most can be used in either context.





2 approaches and activities

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Audio Tapes -- (dictation, listening practice, drills, tapes of guest speakers, e.g.). Teacher, student-made or commercially prepared, tapes lend themselves to extended multi-level activity. Learners can listen for content, particular words or phrases. Popular songs work well as cloze (fill in the blanks) exercises. Learners can generate and tape dialogs and then transcribe them; language experience stories can be read on tape and listened to by learners who then read the accompanying texts during independent/individual working times.

for example:

leaving a message -- record 5 - 10 different phone messages [e.g., This is Juan Alvarez, please ask Peter to call me. My number is 345-6789.]. You can use 'while you were out' preprinted forms, develop your own forms, or ask learners to use a blank sheet of paper to record the messages in writing. As they advance, they may want to record their own messages.

reading a text -- you and/or your learner might read a simple text (one they've already written and/or read, or a new reading). The learner then transcribes the audio text into written form. Stories from *Expressions* or Personal Stories provide useful texts for reading and taping.

Bingo -- sets of bingo cards can be designed for specific topics, such as months/days/digital or analog clock times, occupations, colors, numbers [numerals/words], foods, items of clothing, etc. Words and/or pictures can be used to create each card. Use bottle caps, beans, coins, buttons, etc. for markers. Aside from providing a change of pace, bingo cards and the process of playing bingo involve reading horizontally and vertically, scanning, matching sounds, symbols and images, and can reinforce certain forms of 'document' literacy (reading forms, grids, applications).

B	I	N	G	O

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for example:
Using cardboard or heavy paper, make 12 squares, 4 down and 3 across*. On each of the squares write or draw the words/items that are being studied (such as socks, shoes, belt, shirt, skirt, pants, dress, etc.). Make as many cards as you have learners, plus one for yourself. Part of the project might include showing learners how to make the cards, and having them each make one or two different cards. All of the cards should be different -- each card should have one 'free' square, and all of them should have at least one item not found on the others. Use index cards, or small pieces of paper to write all the words that might be found on the bingo cards. You or a learner can read the cards, (or show the pictures, if you use drawings). As each word/picture is read/ shown, the corresponding square is covered on the bingo board. The first person to complete the board wins, and becomes the next person to call/show the cards. Two or three rounds of this is usually enough, but sometimes people like to play more. This can also be played with learners on their own, and can free your time to work with one learner or group of learners while others are engaged in playing bingo or making their own new boards and cards.

* You can make 9, 15, or'16 squares, depending on the abilities of the group and the numbers of items you want to include in a given bingo board.

Cloze -- a fill in the blanks exercise. You can omit every ___th word, or pronouns, verbs, or other particular words/parts of speech upon which you want to focus. For very beginning level students, cloze is a good exercise for copying -- visual discrimination (learning the difference between "p" and "b", for example), letter formation, etc. It's also good practice for working on high frequency (commonly used) words.

for example:
Copy a language experience story that learners have written, but omit certain words along the way. (e.g. **His ____ is Juan. ___ comes from the Dominican _______. He is 34 _____ old. He ___ married.**).

Learners who are just beginning to be able to read can copy, following word by word in order to complete the exercise. For other more advanced learners, you can focus on verbs, omitted every verb in a text, or all the words that begin with a certain letter, etc.

Dialogue journals -- tutors and learners communicate regularly on a one to one basis through writing in a small journal on whatever topics interest the learner. The process works from learners' existing strengths and knowledge. Weekly writing in the dialog journal encourages both individual and collaborative interaction with reading and writing.

Rationale: Dialog journal writing provides a means for student-tutor written interaction and communication in a non-threatening, individualized manner. Learners are invited to write to their teacher or tutor, working from their own level of ability.

Getting started: Beginning learners might be asked to write one or two sentences about how they're feeling on a particular day. More advanced students might be invited to write 3-5 sentences about their weekend, their job, their family, etc. The tutor then responds to the writing by either posing additional questions, reflecting upon content, contributing his/her own information or offering sympathy, congratulations, etc.

Errors and corrections: Explicit corrections are *not* made within or on the learners' actual writing, but may be modeled in the tutors' responses. (For example, if a learner reports: *"Yester-day I have some time, go went downtown to shopping"*, a tutor may respond with, *"I'm glad you had time to go shopping. When you went shopping, did your children go with you?"*).

Seeing progress: Some errors will not change quickly with or without explicit correction; the point of this exercise is to encourage learners to try to write and read for meaning and for communication. The journal is not a place to focus on formally correct writing. As time passes, learners see their entries grow in length and often see improvements in their writing as well.

Building up to the journal:

The writing process can be intimidating. In order to demystify writing to some extent, it may help to consider the following:
-- learners' uses of reading and writing on a daily basis;
-- kinds of reading and writing tasks in which learners engage [time cards, shopping lists, letters to family or school, bills, etc.];

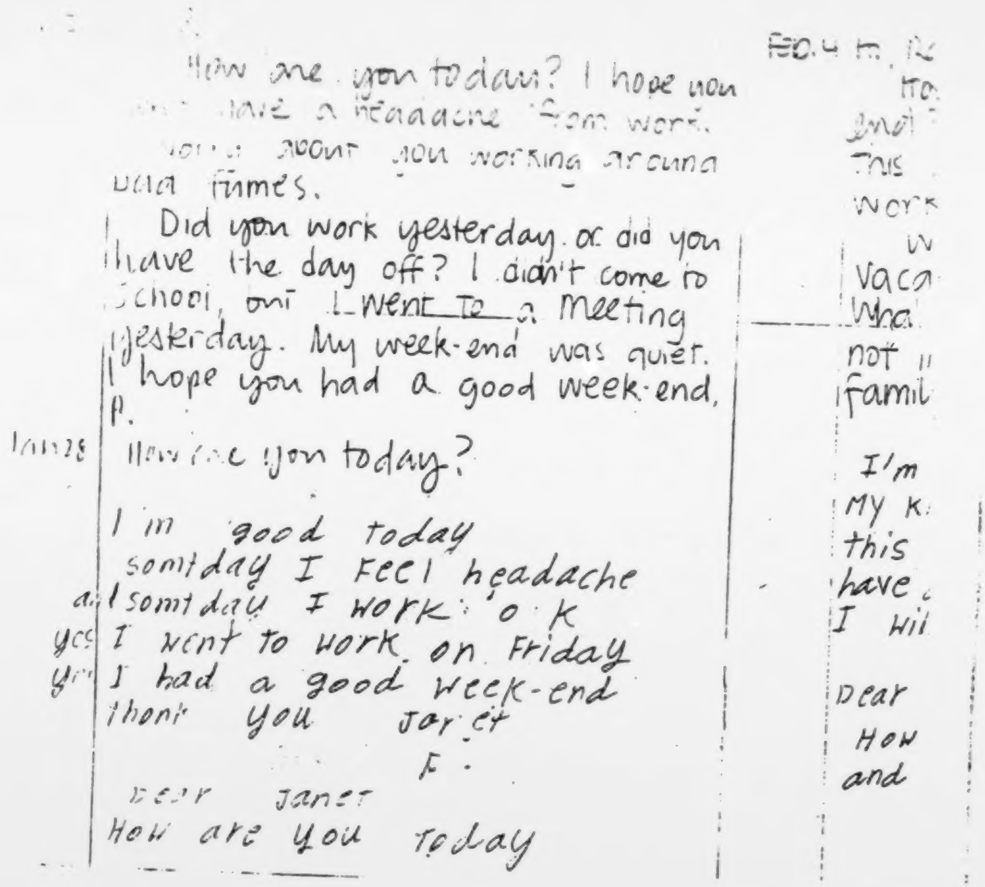
-- ways in which to work from the whole (a written communication) to its parts (ideas, words, sentences, etc.).

To begin to engage learners in the reading/writing interaction, consider:

-- using the blackboard or other regularly designated area to post a question, statement, or simple written communication every day, to which learners can respond orally, initially, and possibly later in writing. Examples include: space (on the blackboard) for the date, a weather report or other daily information to be written, current events posted, etc.
-- having learners exchange simple written questions with each other at regular intervals (weekly, every two days).

Approaches to consider in beginning the journal process:

-- focus on a specific topic, such as family, work, housing situations;
-- free writing;
-- question/answer format.
Some people use the journal to increase communication between themselves and their learners, and focus on the meaning communicated in the writings. Others respond to learners' requests for correction. Some possible ways of correcting journal entries without inhibiting free communication include:
-- modeling correct usage in tutor's response;
-- underlining problem areas and asking learners to consider what the problems might be [verb tense, agreement, or spelling, etc.].
-- using one side of the page or notebook only for writing and using the facing side/page for corrections;
-- taking note of learners' problem areas and addressing those separately. In working out ways to individualize students' work, reading/writing problems that surface in the journal may facilitate organization of appropriate activities for individual, pair or small group work.



How are you today? I hope you ... have a headache from work. ... about you working around odd times.

Did you work yesterday or did you have the day off? I didn't come to school, but I went to a meeting yesterday. My week-end was quiet. I hope you had a good week-end,

P.

Jan 28 How are you today?

I'm good today
somtday I feel headache
a somtday I work o k
yes I went to work on Friday
ye I had a good week-end
thank you Janet

F.

Dear Janet
How are you today

Feb. 4 m. R
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Wha
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famil

I'm
My K
this
have
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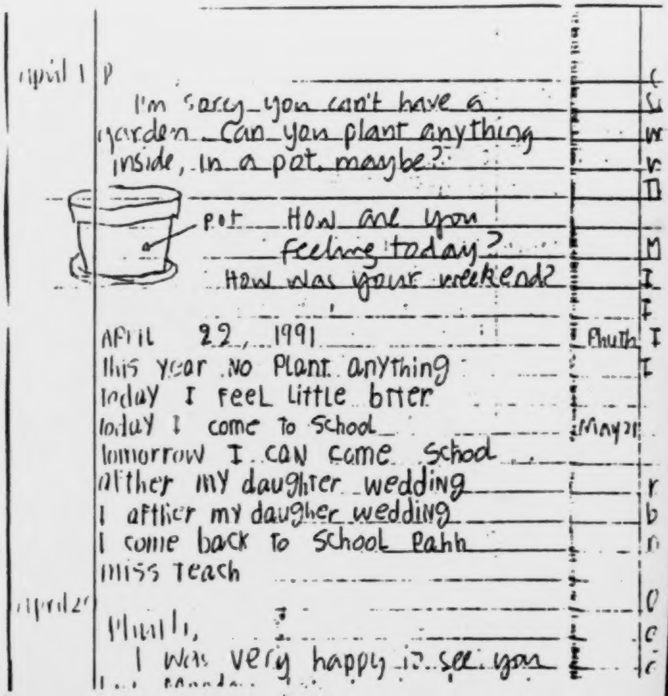
Dear
How
and



april 1 P
I'm sorry you can't have a garden. Can you plant anything inside, in a pot maybe?

pot How are you feeling today?
How was your weekend?

April 22, 1991
This year no Plant anything
today I feel little btter
today I come to School
tomorrow I can come School
afther my daughter wedding
I afther my daugher wedding
I come back to School Pahh
miss Teach

april 22 Phuth,
I was very happy to see you

Phuth
May 21

Dyads -- various interactive pair activities: information gaps, charts, grids, giving/receiving directions. The goal of dyads is to create a situation of interdependence. Learners need each other (and each other's information) to accomplish a task, fill in a form, solve a problem or otherwise complete a given activity. (See also **pair work, grids**).

for example:
Two learners (or groups of learners) have the same map, but one person/group has locations of 4 places marked on the map, and the other has locations of 4 different places marked on their map; together they complete marking all 8 locations on a map. They can ask, "What's in the building on Brown street, next to the bank?" and other questions in order to elicit the needed information from the other person or group.

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Say these addresses.

1) 30 King St., Apt. 4
2) 400 Lincoln Ave.
3) 230 E. Kennedy Ave.
4) 3 W. Johnson Road
5) 3450 Greenwood St.
6) 22 W. 41st Ave.
7) 20 Hill Ave.,Apt. 3
8) 403 S. Lake St.
9) 2030 E. Oak Ave.
10) 241 1st Ave.

NOTES:

Prior to the activity, review common street names in your community. Usually a community has "Main Street", First, Second, Third, etc. Review the use of abbreviations - # for Apartment number, 7th for seventh, St. for Street, etc.

A sample interchange to practice when dictating the addresses is:

Student B: *For number 1. What address is it?*

Student A: *Ten Oak Street.* (Reads from the Information Card)

Student B: *Ten Oak Street.* (Writes the address.)

Special note: You may wish to review the letters of the alphabet before the activity if students will become involved in spelling the names of the streets.

Flashcards -- key phrases, vocabulary words, or sentences can be written on cards or strips of paper and then are physically manipulated, arranged, seen, used, read, etc. Sentence strips can be cut up and put back together again. Learners can also use sentence strips and/or flashcards to create new phrases. Learners sometimes keep a file of flashcards for reference; they can see the number of words they've learned increase. Other learners prefer to keep lists of words, or to organize their writing in notebooks.

for example:
After reading a new story, learners might write words they want to learn, or that are new to them on flashcards. They can then 'quiz' each other -- having each other read and/or spell the new words. As learners become more advanced they might use the cards to learn alphabetization skills, or group the cards into different categories -- foods, articles of clothing, verbs, names of classmates, etc.
If there is a storage area for small group tutorials, students may want to create a group set of flashcards to be used at the learning center, in addition to flashcards they make and keep for their own use.

Grids -- a useful format for beginning readers. Essential information appears horizontally and/or vertically. Encourages various left/right, up/down scanning skills. Grids can be built around learners' dates of birth, number of children, addresses, zip codes, phone numbers, jobs, etc. Useful in providing information for comparison in a visual format that can be read easily -- without 'connecting' words, or long sentences (which *can* be built from information taken from a grid).(See also **interview/ information grids, alphanumeric grids** and **pair work**).

Interview / information grids -- students interview each other and insert given responses into appropriate places on the grid. Working from basic information questions they normally ask each other (e.g., where do you come from? are you married?, etc.), learners place the information under appropriate headings, as illustrated below. Building the grid and filling in the needed information allows learners at all levels to participate -- through writing, reading, and/or responding to requested information.

Name	How many children?	working?
Juanita	4	yes
Carlos	0	yes
Pedro	3	yes
Maria	2	no

Who is working?

Who isn't working?

Juanita has four children. She is working.
Carlos has no children. He is working.
Pedro has three children. He is working.
Maria has two children. She's not working.

Who has 4 children?
Who has no children?
Who has 3 children?

Alphanumeric grids -- learners use information generated previously through conversation, to complete alphanumeric grids. This is important beginning work for map reading (particularly local street guides) and for other kinds of document literacy, as it requires reading both across and up and down the page. (Document literacy refers to forms or charts that use horizontal and vertical formats).

for example:
Using, the grid on the following page, learners can practice reading and/or hearing instructions (given by the facilitator or by other learners, such as: Put the [name of this month] in G-11; write your last name in F-3.) As in bingo, the information asked for can relate to whatever context or content that learners are studying at a given time.

Name

A	Juan	M		
B	$4.31	TINA		8/15/81
C	August	Thursday	single	
D		Wednesday	10	10
E	0	881.1234		15 OAK ST PROV, RI
	1	2	3	4

Hangman -- Hangman is good for the first or last five or ten minutes of a class or tutoring session to reinforce new words or even multi-word messages, or to use words learners know but perhaps haven't written that particular day. Predicting, counting letters, using vowels and consonants are all valuable subskills developed within the context of playing the game. These skills emerge after learners have played several times; there's no need to introduce vowels/ consonants in isolation. As learners get the feel of the game, and understand that 'r' might not be an appropriate choice to complete 'n_xt', they begin to get a sense of how vowels and consonants work (if they haven't already through their own ongoing interaction with writing and reading). They're using previous learning; they are to predict the word 'next' because it is a word they've seen frequently. Messages or words that might be used include reminders (e.g., holiday- no class tomorrow), jokes, phrases (have a good weekend), or other relevant information.

for example:

_ _ _ _ _

Blanks can be written on the blackboard or newsprint pad. A five letter word (such as 'beach') has five blank spaces. As learners guess the letters, their correct guesses go in the appropriate blank space; incorrectly guessed letters can be written below, so that learners won't guess them again.

_ e _ c _

f g r l s

Language Experience Approach -- The language experience approach (LEA) is a basic means for generating language in oral and written forms. People adapt and use the approach in many ways. *(A more detailed explanation of LEA for ESL learners appears in the ESL section of this handbook).*

what it is:

Essentially, LEA consists of listening to learners' spoken language and writing it down (transcribing it into written form). Stories emerge from class conversation or discussion resulting from a picture or activity. Tutors listen carefully and draw out information. The learner tells a story, and the tutor (or other scribe) writes that story exactly as s/he hears it. After the story has been written, it is used as the learner's reading material for that particular session.

The **rationale** is that learning to read has to do with connecting previous knowledge of the world (i.e. experience) with print. Readers also use strategies such as inferring and predicting meaning based on that experience. Meaningful content and context is not only more interesting to learners, it is easier to retain. To illustrate, read this fragment and try to recollect it without looking back: *Pat put paper, peppers, potatoes and pots in planters to protect them.* Now read this: *Yesterday I went downtown buy shoes.* The example is exaggerated intentionally -- an emphasis only on phonics has little to do with meaningful content; a sentence describing a real event using high frequency words common and known to learners contains meaning and authentic vocabulary. Such a sentence forms a basis for generating writing that learners can and will want to read. Work on phonics (sound/symbol correspondences) and grammar forms is embedded in the content of the language generated by learners. In its purest form, LEA is an exact encoding of learners' words.

My Name is Reina
I I am From Guatemala
No, I am Not married
I have Two Kids.

how to use it:

LEA can be used with an individual learner in one on one tutoring or at a blackboard in a group learning situation. The story can be constructed by more than one person. One learner might begin to talk about something s/he remembers about a class party, for example. Others might then contribute their recollections until a paragraph (or several paragraphs, with more advanced learners) has been written. The tutor then invites learners to read the paragraph (and might invite them to read every two or three sentences as the story is being written).

With very beginning learners the story might consist of three or four short sentences. An example: **Last week I went to the library. It was cold outside. I took home a book for my son.** Once this story has been encoded, learners read it through several times, together and individually.

Although it may seem that hearing ten other people read the same passage would be tedious, learners remain engaged in the process -- watching, learning from and listening to others; preparing themselves for the trip to the newsprint or blackboard to read. The tutor has a chance to observe who helps who, who 'memorizes' a passage by reading one word while pointing to another, who wants to read first, who needs encouragement from peers, etc.

building literacy activity from LEA:
Once the story has been read, beginning level learners might spend a good amount of time copying it into their notebooks. The tutor might invite learners whose abilities to write lag behind their abilities to read to go to the text and circle 'book' or all the words that begin with a particular letter. The tutor may then encourage more advanced learners might add to the story, or write about their own particular experiences (at the library, or about the topic of the story).

For the next session the story can be typed and distributed to learners for review. Comprehension questions (was it cold outside?) may be added. Other open ended questions (Do you go to the library? Do you like the library?) may generate yet another round of language experience writing. This pattern can be repeated and can develop a constant source of new literacy material, vocabulary and grammatical examples.

Beginning learners might start with photos or other visual images which they label and learn. As they gain more written language, they move gradually away from visual to more written forms. Photos can be used initially for labelling purposes; later sentences and stories may be built from those pictures.

LEA can also be used to encourage learners to write by inviting them to each contribute one sentence to a general topic, such as: **Last week-end I** . . . Learners will each write one sentence about their weekend. Once learners have seen the process modeled -- the tutor listens, asks clarification questions, suggests words when needed and then encodes them -- learners take over the work of scribing with and for each other.

Many literacy activities derive from the language experience approach. LEA all by itself is a starting point. It is important to move from initial fragments to complete sentences with correct grammar over time. It is unfair to send learners out into the world with only a private language, (full of misspellings, or irregular grammar usage) which LEA can become. LEA is a piece of the process of moving from learners' writing to standard English usage.

MY NAME IS EMEBITA

I AM FROM NICARAGUA

I AM NOT MARRIED

THREE BABIES.

Operations -- similar to TPR (see below), operations are processes such as using a pay phone, making a sandwich, using a vending machine in which a procedure may be familiar to students, but the words used in English may be unfamiliar in their oral and/or written forms. Generating instructions (how to do one thing or another) and writing and then reading these steps may contribute to the kinds of literacy associated with following written instructions/directions, such as those found at laundromats, self-service businesses, airports, bus stations, etc.

for example:
Learners reconstruct the process of making coffee (or steaming rice, or preparing some other food or beverage that everyone usually consumes), listing the steps they use to make coffee until everyone agrees that all the steps have been completed. They write up the steps, and then, if facilities allow, complete the procedure they've just outlined. A good text for additional ideas and operations is Live Action English, from Prentice Hall/ Alemany.

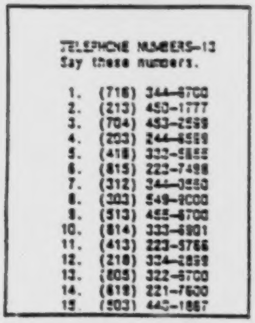
Pair Work -- students can be grouped randomly, advanced with beginner, beginner/beginner, advanced/advanced. The demands of a given task as well as learners' needs and abilities will indicate which grouping arrangement might work best. Learners might interview each other, read together, or work on writing exercises or information gaps. (In an information gap exercise, one learner has information that the other needs, and the other has information the first learner needs, such as locations of stores and places on a street map, etc.). Learners can also practice taking turns dictating and writing names, addresses, numbers, etc. with each other. (An excellent resource for this kind of pair work is Practice with Your Partner, by Linda Mrowicki.)

It's important to vary the groupings so that learners have an opportunity to participate both as learners and as teachers. Peer tutoring can evolve from beginner/advanced combinations, and also tends to evolve naturally across and within any level as students come to know each other and a supportive environment develops.

PRACTICE
WITH YOUR PARTNER

Linda Mrowicki

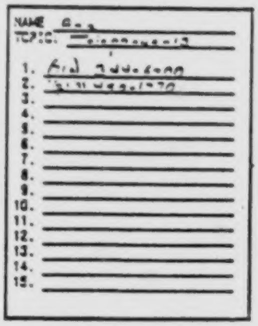
Student A:



TELEPHONE NUMBERS-13
Say these numbers.

1. (718) 344-6700
2. (213) 450-1777
3. (704) 453-2559
4. (203) 244-6559
5. (415) 333-5855
6. (815) 223-7498
7. (312) 344-0550
8. (303) 549-9000
9. (513) 455-6700
10. (814) 333-6901
11. (413) 223-5766
12. (218) 334-2859
13. (805) 322-6700
14. (818) 221-7600
15. (503) 445-1867

Student B:



NAME [illegible]
TOPIC: [illegible]

1. [illegible]
2. [illegible]
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.
15.

125

— Linmore —

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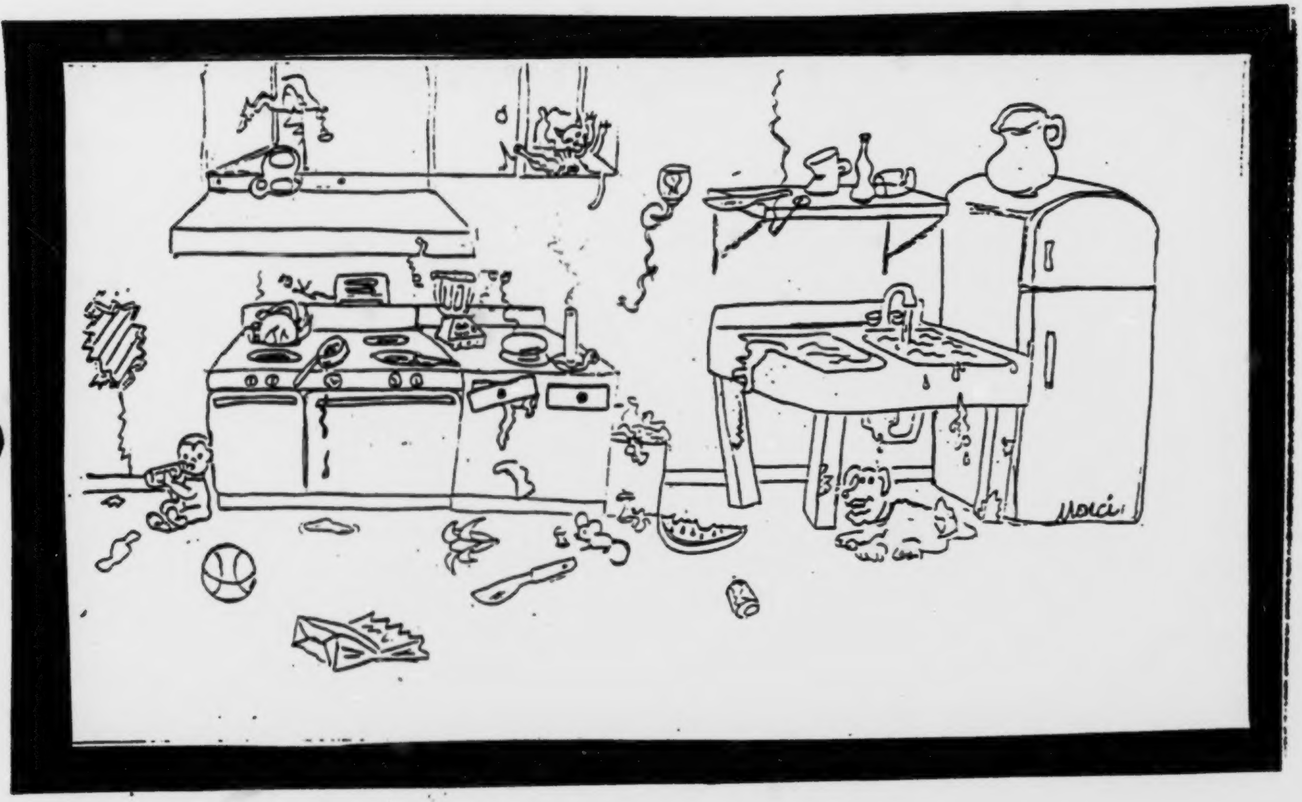
Photos -- of family members, events, from magazines and newspapers (advertisements, local/national news), class events, etc. Photos are very useful in helping students generate language, which can then be developed in various ways according to your particular learners' needs. As learners become more comfortable with each other and with the learning process, spontaneous questions, answers and conversation increase. This oral language may be channeled in language experience writing, or labeling and other forms of written materials. (See also **Visuals**).

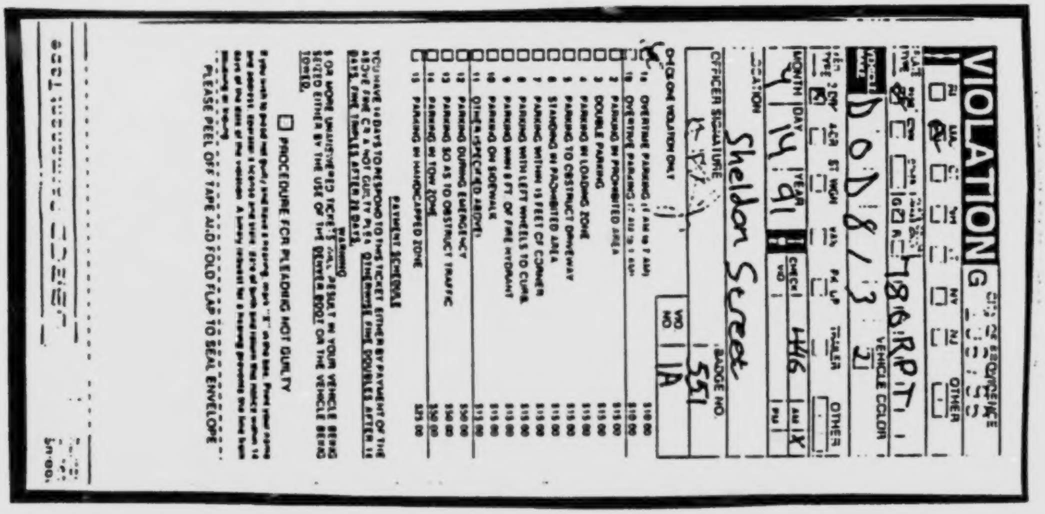
Picture Stories -- focus upon a specific topic, or can be used to generate discussion around an issue or event. Language can be generated as with photos. Learners look at and discuss the story. New words cans be written on the blackboard or newsprint, before the actual story is written out in sentences of phrases. Brainstorming, problem-posing and a variety of other activities can help the tutor elicit language from learners:
brainstorming: Learners list ideas or events that are depicted in the picture story. They might look at the first four (out of eight) pictures and try to guess what might happen in the second half of the picture story. **problem-posing**: Learners might look at a picture depicting a potential hazard (such as Ligon's depiction of a kitchen littered with trash, and full of safety hazards) and discuss what might be done to help the the woman whose kitchen it is to clean up. How can someone tell someone else that their house may be unclean or unsafe? What is 'safe' or 'clean' in one culture and not in another? What would you do if you walked into a friend's kitchen and saw what is depicted in the story? Is this something that has happened to you? The pictures often spark discussion about related issues, (e.g. "no one could have a kitchen that dirty", but the overloaded electrical sockets, or the dangling cord from the hot coffee pot are more common problems).

Sequencing and scrambling exercises can be developed. Picture stories generally involve multiple images, which relate some event or problem. Fred Ligon's Picture Stories is one of the best published compilations currently available. Double Action Picture Cards, by Earl Stevick and Jane Yedlin, and Lexicarry, by Pat Moran are also useful drawings and visuals to which words can be added, and from which stories and other writings can be developed.


Marci

Realia -- real objects -- junk mail, coupons, magazines, parking tickets, appointment cards, drivers' licenses, coins and paper money, food stamps, pay stubs, newspaper and other print advertisement, posters, flyers, report cards from children's schools -- any real ('*authentic*') print encountered by adults in the course of day to day living. Learners might bring in bills or mail that they want to learn about or they might ask about billboards or other print they've seen. Realia can be tied into other ongoing themes and can also be connected to approaches listed here.

for example:



VIOLATION G

CITY OF PROVIDENCE

RI ☐ MA ☒ CT ☐ NH ☐ VT ☐ NY ☐ NJ ☐ OTHER ☐

PLATE TYPE 786RPT

VEHICLE MAKE DOD 8/13 VEHICLE COLOR 2

BODY TYPE 2 DR ☒ 4 DR ☐ ST WGN ☐ VAN ☐ PK UP ☐ TRAILER ☐ OTHER ☐

MONTH 4 DAY 14 YEAR 91 CHECK 446 AM X PM

LOCATION Sheldon Street

OFFICER SIGNATURE BADGE NO. 551

CHECK ONE VIOLATION ONLY VIO. NO 1A

☒	1a	OVERTIME PARKING (1 AM to 7 AM)	$10.00
☐	1b	OVERTIME PARKING (7 AM to 1 AM)	$10.00
☐	2	PARKING IN PROHIBITED AREA	$15.00
☐	3	DOUBLE PARKING	$15.00
☐	4	PARKING IN LOADING ZONE	$15.00
☐	5	PARKING TO OBSTRUCT DRIVEWAY	$15.00
☐	6	STANDING IN PROHIBITED AREA	$15.00
☐	7	PARKING WITHIN 15 FEET OF CORNER	$15.00
☐	8	PARKING WITH LEFT WHEELS TO CURB	$15.00
☐	9	PARKING WITHIN 8 FT. OF FIRE HYDRANT	$15.00
☐	10	PARKING ON SIDEWALK	$15.00
☐	11	OTHER (SPECIFIED ABOVE)	$15.00
☐	12	PARKING DURING EMERGENCY	$50.00
☐	13	PARKING SO AS TO OBSTRUCT TRAFFIC	$50.00
☐	14	PARKING IN TOW ZONE	$50.00
☐	15	PARKING IN HANDICAPPED ZONE	$25.00

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

YOU HAVE 14 DAYS TO RESPOND TO THIS TICKET EITHER BY PAYMENT OF THE ABOVE FINE OR A NOT GUILTY PLEA. OTHERWISE FINE DOUBLES AFTER 14 DAYS, FINE TRIPLES AFTER 28 DAYS.

WARNING

5 OR MORE UNANSWERED TICKETS WILL RESULT IN YOUR VEHICLE BEING SEIZED EITHER BY THE USE OF THE DENVER BOOT OR THE VEHICLE BEING TOWED.

☐ PROCEDURE FOR PLEADING NOT GUILTY

If you wish to plead not guilty and have a hearing, mark "X" in the box. Print your name and address, operator's license and state, date of birth and return this notice within 14 days of the date of the violation. A timely request for a hearing prevents the fine from doubling or tripling.

PLEASE PEEL OFF TAPE AND FOLD FLAP TO SEAL ENVELOPE

Learners can examine the parking ticket, and describe the information they can decipher from the ticket. Once everyone has discussed the ticket -- what it's for, how much the fine costs, etc., learners with cars might want to learn each others' license plate numbers, and write their own 'tickets' for each other. An extension activity might be describing and/or role play traffic court -- what happens when you plead 'not guilty' on a traffic ticket? What's the difference between a parking ticket and a speeding ticket?, etc.

Scrambling/sequencing -- sentences, pictures, paragraphs. As with flashcards, language/images can be manipulated. Works well within a given topics; levels of complexity can vary within the class. (Beginners can unscramble/sequence short sentences, paragraphs, etc., and more advanced students can do proportionately more).

for example:

Learners might generate a short story which they read, copy and review. The next day the teacher might ask a learner to reread the story and then using the sentences in the story, (and having copied them onto larger strips of paper), distribute the strips and ask learners to arrange them in the correct order.

I left this morning at 8:30. In went downtown. For lunch I ate a sandwich. I came home. I had supper at 7.

For lunch I ate a sandwich.

I went downtown.

I left this morning at 8:30.

I came home.

I had supper at 7.

for ate sandwich I a lunch.

I emac ohem. I dah pupsre ta 7.

This exercise can be adapted for many different levels. Learners need to handle many different levels of complexity in sequencing when they write for themselves. The type of scrambles you create needs to follow from the skill levels of the specific learners who you work with.

TPR: Total Physical Response -- uses specific, simple instructions, with limited vocabulary, which demand a physical response. TPR can be used to help learners **hear** and **respond** to commands, such as 'please pick up the red pencil'. The tutor focuses on objects in the classroom vocabulary, prepositions, and verbs of motion. (e.g., 'Please put the book on the table').

A common use of TPR is to work with one key phrase (e.g. 'pick up the...') and to repeat it until learners are familiar with it. (The tutor asks learners to pick up objects the tutor points to). Once familiar with the phrase, learners can take over, and create small changes in the phrase. ('Put the pencil on the book' becomes 'put the pencil next to the book', and then 'put the pencil under the book.'). The complexity of the phrases develops with learners' ability to speak and their increases in confidence.

Learners **respond** to various requests that demand a physical response, (such as, 'go to the door'), without having to **say** or repeat them. Research shows that learners are most able to remember and re-use language when they are exposed to it in a context where the meaning is clear.

In multi-level settings, learners whose spoken language is more advanced might instruct other learners, using simple commands/ requests, or guiding them through simple processes (such as how to write a date). These commands can be given orally, or in writing: literacy exercises on the blackboard, or on flashcards; one word commands such as 'erase', 'write', 'read', etc. Commands in both oral and written forms can grow in length and complexity as learners progress; within the multilevel class both simple and more complex commands can be combined.

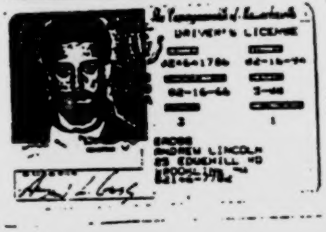
At all levels, with TPR, 'please' is important.

TPR relies more or less upon the premise that learners aren't asked to produce language until they are familiar and comfortable with it.

for example:
Learners can develop a procedure (see **operations**, above) and then can instruct each other in completing the steps required within the operation. They can also practice smaller, more discrete skills, such as asking each other to give or take various objects, (e.g., give me the pen, take the pencil, pick up the quarter, give me two dimes and one nickel, etc.). This activity also helps learners with working out clarification questions and strategies, such as asking, "Penny or pencil?", pointing, gesturing, etc.

Visuals -- photos, picture stories, and realia ('real' materials, such as coupons, junk mail, bank forms, drivers' licenses, etc.) can be used in various ways. Students can work individually, in pairs, in small groups or as a whole group developing LEA writing, asking/answering questions, describing (adjectives, comparatives, superlatives) using pronouns, practicing verbs tenses -- the possibilities are limitless. Visuals serve as useful codes for problem-posing at all levels, too.

for example:
If learners are willing to share their drivers licenses or other forms of photo ID, you can xerox them (enlarging them, if possible) and then generate questions with the learners, e.g., *How tall is [student a?].When is ____'s birthday? What's _____'s address?, etc.*



Using advertisements from newspapers, magazines, or direct mail, learners can discuss the relative merits of a given product, in terms of cost, usefulness, comparable products available at discount houses, etc. They can write their own advertising copy, or discuss and write about why the product is not a good one. By asking learners about products they see in advertisement (Do you have/use this? Do you think this would be a good thing to have/ use?, etc.), you gain a sense of what products would be interesting to them, which they'd like to learn about, discuss, criticize or try.

Writers' Groups

The writing group approach to working with learners may work well for you if you are working with a group who can comfortably write and discuss more than a few sentences.

The Adult Academy has organized and facilitated writing groups at Central Falls Community Center, North Providence Senior Citizens' Center, Providence Center and Veterans Community Care Center, and offers assistance to others wishing to start writing groups as well. Writing groups provide opportunities for community members to come together to write. Some of the writing produced appears in the Adult Academy's publication *Expressions*. More importantly, however, adult new readers and writers are engaged in a process of building community and using writing as a form of expression of their own thoughts and ideas.

Essentially, the work done in a writing group can be seen as an extension of the language experience approach process. A group leader brings in a code or topic for the day, presents it to the group which discusses it. Everybody then writes for ten or twenty minutes on that topic. Writers share their work with others in the group, who ask questions, make suggestions and generally help each other to clarify and strengthen the writing they do. This group process is very important -- everyone participates as readers, writers of their own and of each other's work. For people who are newly learning to read and write, the process supports their learning. For others, the building of community is critical. For everyone, the process of writing, revising and sharing feelings and written work is an exciting process.

Writing groups have facilitators who function somewhat like tutors in helping to guide the writers through the writing process, suggesting various activities aimed toward strengthening individuals' abilities to write clearly. Similarly, tutors may wish to engage in writing activities with their learners within the framework of the learning centers in which they study. For more information on writing groups and their work, contact the Adult Academy.

materials

Creating materials can be viewed as an ongoing process. In Adult Academy programs, writings by learners form the bulk of the reading material used by many learners. In addition to learner-generated writings, some commercial texts and materials can be used (adapted and/or expanded) by tutors in order to meet the specific needs of their learners. In this section, we discuss ways to choose materials and offer a listing of different materials that we order for our programs.

choosing materials: criteria

More important than the materials themselves is the criteria used for selecting them. The strongest materials offer flexibility in content, reading or interest level. They offer learners many ways to interact with text. Some texts use visuals so that learners may engage first through a visual image, develop their own pre-reading questions or even do some writing themselves prior to interacting with the text on the page. Other texts may provide less visual input but are of high interest or relevance to a given group of learners at a particular time. Other materials are not texts at all but rather print realia brought to class by learners: photos, post cards, flyers and other visual or print images of interest to the group. Regardless of the medium, it is the process through which these materials are used that will ultimately determine their usefulness. Naturally, some materials lend themselves better than others to literacy learning, but, by and large, almost any print bearing meaning of interest to learners can be useful.

the materials

When you examine materials, consider these questions:

reading/writing level

How does the material 'read' visually? What does a page look like? What about print size, print density, the amount of white space on a page? Does it appear 'hard' to read? Does it look too easy or juvenile? Is the page too busy? How does the layout of the page -- illustrations, visuals -- enhance the text and help the reader into it?

generating interest

How do learners become engaged in interaction with print? Will pre-reading strategies help them develop schema through which to build understanding of the text they'll read, thereby increasing their ability to predict, infer and otherwise interact actively with the printed words (and visual images?) How do you select a reading for your learners? What opportunity or choice do they have in initiating or selecting reading materials?

content

Are the themes and topics of interest to learners? Is the material presented in a culturally appropriate manner? Is it geared to adults? Is it interesting? Is it connected to events or experiences of interest to learners ?

assumptions/hidden agendas (between the lines)

What messages are implicit from ways in which characters and events are depicted? Is a deficit view of the non native speaker/non-/low-literate adult being implied or stated in the situations or characters in the text? (Does the text portray adults in a negative light because of problems with language or literacy?). Does the text assume that learners have prior knowledge of the world, and help them learn and work from their strengths? Is there evidence of bias -- racial, economic, social? Is one ethnic group perhaps illustrated in one way while another might be portrayed in a less sympathetic or realistic light?[1]

adaptability: extending/expanding

How can you use the materials? Can the learners use them independently, or are they designed for reading and writing with other learners? Is the book designed for group or individual learning (are there 'ask your partner' or other dyad exercises)? Is a text reliant upon a cassette tape? Can the text be adapted up or down level to accommodate a multi-level class? Are you inspired by the text to develop new activities and exercises more suited to your specific learners?

use of photos/visuals

Photos and other visual images are very effective in generating discussion, from which writing and reading activity evolves. Although learners' family photos and pictures of events often generate the most sustained interest, there are other sources of visuals which are useful for a variety of contexts.

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[1] see "The Hidden Curriculum of Survival ESL", by Elsa Auerbach and Denise Burgess, reprinted in Freire for the Classroom, ©1987 by Ira Shor, Boynton/Cook Publishers, A division of Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.

commercially made visuals

The following is a sample listing of several commercially produced visual materials designed for literacy and language learning. Most are in the Adult Academy library.

Double Action Picture Cards . Using oversized (20 by 14") black and white drawings, the cards depict common and not so common events in two sections (each of which can be viewed separately).

One card shows a family, in which two older people (parents?) are shown in their home, dressed up to go out. Their children are lined up in front of them. In and of itself the card can be used to start discussion about families and social customs: baby sitters, large/ small families, going out, etc. However, in conjunction with its other picture (the *double action*), wherein the children are running wild all over the house and street, one can add in a discussion of attitudes towards obedience, child proofing and general household safety, appropriate behavior (whatever that may be). One can ask, "What do you think will happen?" after looking at the first card and thus lead into the second. Or, one can use either card by itself. An instructor's guide lists suggested language/grammar activities to complement the cards. For learners who are able to 'read' drawings, the cards lend themselves to any number of language experience and literacy centered activities. (Jane Yedlin and Earl Stevick).

Picture dictionaries and wall charts : Oxford has produced a Picture Dictionary in both English and bilingual versions covering predictable topics -- body parts, rooms of the house (generally well appointed houses -- not apartments), clothing, maps, animals, cars, etc. The dictionaries use full page pictures of settings and/or objects, and number each object within a picture. The written words appear on the page in numerical order beneath the picture.

Longman Photo Dictionary Covers comparable topics, with the obvious advantage of using photographs which might be easier to decipher than drawings. Again, the mainstream/middle class images may work both as catalysts of discussion or simply as descriptive renderings of objects and events. The photo dictionary wall charts are particularly useful for their images of supermarkets, common fast foods, body parts and colors.

Richard Toglia and others produced Picture It! This book has sequenced illustrations of daily activities ('Morning Routine', 'A Doctor's Office') Learners develop written and/or spoken language to describe the pictures. After each section there are sample phrases describing the pictures, and one or two developmental activities.

use of audio and videotape: learner/teacher ongoing assessment

When possible or available, taping classes allows the practitioner to observe learner interaction from a distance. When videotaping, focus on learners provides the best information. The facilitator is heard, and not seen. Viewing the tape provides insight to learners and facilitators about their own progress (show a tape you made three months ago). Learners also enjoy watching a tape immediately after it's been made. Audio tapes, though less satisfying in some ways also provide a very objective description of classroom interaction.

learner generated publications

ABE

Voices : New Writers for New Readers, a magazine of learners' writings published by the Invergarry Reading Centre in Vancouver. Ranging from 'new voices' to 'transitions' to 'later writings', the magazine is published three times yearly and includes autobiographical statements, letters in response to previous writings and reviews of films and books. 14525 110A Ave. Surrey, British Columbia, V3R 2B4 Canada.

Expressions: A bi-weekly journal of learners' writing gathered from local (RI and nearby Massachusetts) literacy programs. Available in journal or book form through the Adult Academy.

Looking Forward, Looking Back, Writings from Many Worlds : ESL/literacy learners' writings from the Family Literacy Project at UMass/Boston, 1989.

Need I Say More : ESL/literacy learners' writings, through the Adult Literacy Resource Institute, 989 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215.

Street Voices: Learners' writings, generated by learners in Travelers Aid literacy programs in Providence.

suggestions for using commercial materials

Using a workbook

This page, from Starting to Read, by Linda Mrowicki, lends itself well to small group and/or multi-level learning.

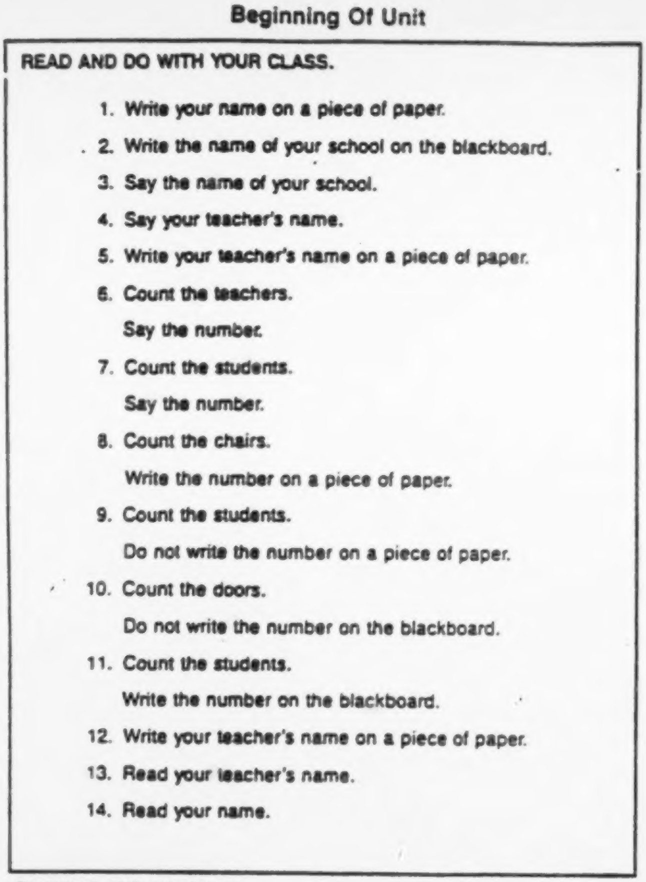
The teacher can read all the instructions to the learners, or the learners can take turns reading the sentences and then having each other complete the task required in each sentence.

A more advanced learner could instruct one or two other learners to complete the tasks, or two or three learners could work together to complete them.

To prepare the learners to read the instructions, the facilitator could make flashcards of the imperative (command) words:

write
say
count
read

Learners can write, count, say and read things around the classroom, already familiar to them.



Beginning Of Unit

READ AND DO WITH YOUR CLASS.

1. Write your name on a piece of paper.
2. Write the name of your school on the blackboard.
3. Say the name of your school.
4. Say your teacher's name.
5. Write your teacher's name on a piece of paper.
6. Count the teachers.
   Say the number.
7. Count the students.
   Say the number.
8. Count the chairs.
   Write the number on a piece of paper.
9. Count the students.
   Do not write the number on a piece of paper.
10. Count the doors.
    Do not write the number on the blackboard.
11. Count the students.
    Write the number on the blackboard.
12. Write your teacher's name on a piece of paper.
13. Read your teacher's name.
14. Read your name.

34

Reprinted with permission
from Starting to Read by
Linda Mrowicki, 1988.
Linmore Publishing, Inc. P.O. Box 1545, Palatine, IL 60078

After learners are familiar with both written and oral forms of the commands, they can work on the page in the workbook independently, or with assistance from each other or their tutor.

---

to expand this activity, learners can compile their own lists of commands and instructions and take turns asking each other to complete various tasks, such as:

1. Write your last name.
2. Write the first name of the person sitting next to you.
3. Count the pencils on the table.
4. Say your teacher's name.
5. Write everyone's first name on the blackboard.
6. Read everyone's first name.

---

more beginning level learners can compile more basic lists:

1. Write your first name.
2. Count the pens on the table.
3. Read your first name
4. Say your last name.
5. Count the students in the room.

books/materials from publishing houses

Auerbach, Elsa & Wallerstein, Nina. (1987) ESL for Action: Problem Posing at Work - series of codes and lesson plans for problem posing activities with work-related issues. Some supporting information on labor and civil rights laws. Good for intermediate, advanced ESL and literacy learners. Addison-Wesley

Cameron, Penny. (1990) Bridge Across the Americas - Favorite Hispanic Stories Illustrated myths, fables, and legends from various Latino cultures. Include pre-reading activities, exercises for 'using what you know', comprehension activities (sequencing, true/false, etc), vocabulary review (multiple choice, definition questions), questions for discussion, writing and drawing activities in response to readings. A good book for many ages; requires significant reading skills. Dormac

ABE

Holstein, Barbara (1990) The Childbearing Year A guide book of sorts intended for new or soon-to-be parents, particularly teen mothers. Covers pregnancy, birth, going home, and early post-natal care. Includes discussion of contraception. More informational than for reading development, this book is designed for new readers. Most appropriate for very advanced ESL or pre-GED and above level readers. New Readers Press.

Kuntz, Laurie. (1988) The New Arrival (Book I, In the Refugee Camp; Book II, In the United States) - stories and codes with language development activities focused on vocabulary, grammar, meaning, and responsive writing. Alemany Press

Ligon, Fred. (1990). Picture Stories - sequenced line drawings accompanied by numerous literacy and language activities, pertaining to survival/cultural orientation issues, occupations, daily situations in the US. Longman.

ESL

Long, Llynellyn D. and Janet Spiegel-Podnecky. (1988). In Print: Beginning Literacy through Cultural Awareness. - combines standard life skills topics with both phonics, matching and other literacy exercises with a problem-posing approach. Uses photos and line drawings; separate Teachers' Guide available. Addison-Wesley.

Lutheran Settlement House Women's Program. (1988). Remembering, Books 1 and 2. - uses oral histories, generated by learners to develop reading, comprehension, and critical thinking. New Reader's Press.

ESL

Mrowicki, Linda. (1990). First Words - uses photos, one or two word captions, literacy exercises to cover the following topics/contexts: school, rooms of the house, personal information. Linmore.

ESL

______________. (1989). Starting to Read: - moves from single words to sentences and paragraphs covering school, home, personal and cultural information embedded in writings about individual people. Illustrated with photos. Linmore.

______________. (1985, 1987, 1989). Personal Stories 1, 2, and 3. The lives of six sets of characters/families are detailed over three years. Beginning with simple sentences (in Book 1) and developing through to complex paragraphs, the series introduces readers to fiction reading about various 'typical' Americans. Comprehension, production and problem posing exercises accompany each chapter. Illustrated with photos. Linmore.

ESL

______________. (1986). Practice with Your Partner. Dyad cards on the topics of numbers, addresses, time and other daily language/literacy; provides useful practice in dictation and other manipulations of language and literacy in a controlled format. Linmore.

ESL

Mrowicki, Linda & Furnborough, Peter. (1982) A New Start (Books 1, 2) An excellent book for ESL, Deaf, and other learners who are not literate in their own language, or whose language is not written. Both books have structured pre-reading activities for alphabet and numbers literacy. Almost all activities have strong visuals which give meaning to the print and numbers used. Many activities require learners to hunt for and identify different letters and words. Dormac, Heinemann

ABE

News for You Weekly newspaper for new readers. Current national and international news, useful with all adult learner. The Adult Academy sends subscriptions to most learning centers or programs where we work. Includes a sheet of questions, puzzles, and activities to accompany that week's news stories. New Readers Press

Olsen, Judy Winn-Bell. (1984). Look Again Pictures for Language Development and Life Skills. Timothy White created pairs of line drawings showing common events/situations (a coffee shop, a kitchen, a driving school, a clothing store, etc.). Each pair of drawings is almost identical; there are 8 tiny differences that learners find and circle. Visual activity leads to sequenced exercises addressing language functions, lifeskills, and other language based activities with concrete contexts. Alemany.

ESL

Palmer, Adrian & Rodgers, Theodore & Olsen, Judy Winn-Bell (1985) Back & Forth: Pair Activities for Language Development Activities which require learners to work in pairs or small groups using many skills together. Strips with several similar pictures - all learners have strips, one learner must describe a specific picture and others must find and circle that picture. Exercises with groups of similar words where learners must listen and mark or write down the words they hear. More complex exercises start with one sentence which a learner reads aloud; other learners must pick or create a second and then a third sentence which make sense as sequential responses. Alemany

Robinson, Catherine & Rowekamp, Jenise. (1985) Speaking Up at Work Situation-specific language skills and strategies. Chapters include: 'Understanding work schedules', 'Understanding safety rules', 'Getting incorrect work explained', 'Describing past work and education', 'W-2 forms/Paying taxes'. Includes role-plays, forms, illustrations, models of communication strategies. Oxford University Press

Schenk, Brian, Ed. (1984) Snapshots: A Collection of Readings for Adults (Books 1-8) Archetype of an adult basic reader. Each book is an collection of readings on wide range of topics, from personal experience to the social security system. Each piece has multiple choice questions at the end, and a variety of other reading-related activities such as word hunts, and puzzles. Key at the end of the book with "right" answers. Cambridge.

ABE

Smith, Jeanne & Ringel, Harry. (1991) The Working Experience 1,2,3 Photos of learners in work situations with stories they wrote. Follow-up activities include comprehension (true/false, complete the sentence), language skills (vocabulary, writing & grammar mechanics), follow-up (critical thinking, analysis, responses). New Readers Press.

Terdy, Dennis. (1986) Content Area ESL: Social Studies Literacy, reading in US social studies, from Native Americans to Civil Rights to the mid-1980's. Designed for ESL learners with little previous knowledge of US history and culture, but useful for native speakers, too. Illustrated, with pre-reading, language development, comprehension, and critical thinking activities. Linmore.

Wallerstein, Nina (1983) Language and Culture in Conflict - Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom This book includes a chapter on teaching methods and explanation of problem-posing and codes. It then offers a series of lesson plans based on illustrations (codes) of typical daily conflicts, with role-plays and follow-up activities. A very strong resource book. Addison Wesley

Zuern, Guenther (1985) Images 1, 2 Books of sequenced stories told with actual photographs. Photos are numbered, and include cartoon style bubbles with English dialogue, or captions underneath. (Tutors can use white-out on a xerox if they want learners to fill in the dialogues themselves.) Language development activities accompany the pictures. Addison-Wesley

conclusion: stepping back, looking ahead

This manual was designed to supplement tutor training workshops, as well as to introduce new tutors to adult literacy education. We hope that as you continue to tutor, you might go back and read or re-read sections of the handbook that will make more sense to you and have more meaning as you continue to interact with your learners (in other words, as your schema expands). You may have suggestions about pieces of the handbook that could be improved or changed, and we hope you will pass these comments along to people at the Adult Academy, so that in future updates of the handbook, your suggestions and/or comments can be included.

What suggestions would you change, or add to these?

Suggestions for tutors

1. ESL Learners sometimes use their first languages for clarifying meaning among themselves, to get to know each other, to build friendships. This use of the native language shouldn't be criticized. However, if you feel that use of native languages is becoming a problem, you may want to ask learners how they feel about the amount of time they spend speaking English.

2. Allow for flexibility in lesson planning. Learners' attendance is sometimes fluid. Be prepared to change plans when particular learners may not be present, or when someone comes to you at the beginning of a session with a question or something to be read, etc. If you plan a lesson for a particular learner, have a backup plan in case that learner can't be at the session on that particular day.

3. Remember learners' goals, and check with learners from time to time about changes in their goals. Your role is to facilitate learning for students; sometimes this means guiding learners through a complicated worksheet, at other times it means helping people learn to ask better questions, at yet other times it may mean listening to people reading aloud and answering questions.

4. Do not overemphasize grammar or isolated skills. Grammatical explanations may help when asked for, but it is not helpful to explain something about a language when a person does not understand much of that language. Speak the language; don't speak about the language. Rather, give clear examples and explanations in real contexts.

5. Each site differs in its teacher/learner ratio; remember the importance of communicating with site teachers, as needed/ appropriate.

6. Make each session as relaxed and comfortable as possible.

7. Consider your coordinators, other tutors and learners as your personal resources for teaching ideas, support, and constructive criticism. Talk to each other, exchange ideas, learn from each other. You don't have to work alone!

8. Take advantage of available materials and ideas; recognize their strengths and weaknesses for your particular learners; feel free to develop your own.

9. Feel free to arrange to spend time with your learners outside of the program, but be aware of what time you really have available to spend outside the regular class times. Don't over commit yourself.

10. Try new ideas and materials; compare notes with other tutors.

your suggestions, experiences, learned lessons:
[what I thought before I began, what I think now...]

At some sites, tutors work very closely with teachers. Other sites function as learning centers, and teachers' roles are slightly different. In each instance, the tutor's first responsibility is to the learners -- providing support, encouragement, and facilitating learning. Tutors also have a responsibility to keep teachers and any other tutor trainers updated, through tutor logs, discussions, or other means (letters, phone calls, etc.).

evaluation: how did we do?

During and at the close of each academic year, learners and tutors are asked to respond to their experiences. Tutors were asked to discuss the questions below with their learners, who then responded in writing, at the end of the 1990-91 sessions. Tutors also met together to discuss and respond to questions about their experiences. Their comments, both positive and critical, have helped form the contents of this manual and will shape future workshop sessions as well.

Learners received this letter:

Spring 1991

Dear Students,
We are beginning to plan for next year's classes, and your opinions and ideas are very important to us. Please help us think about this year's program, and make suggestions so that we can improve classes for next year. Thank you very much.

1. When did you begin studying in the program? Why did you come to study?

2. What do you like about the program? Did you like the class? Did you like working with a tutor? Why?

3. What were some things you didn't like about the program, or things you think should change for next year?

4. Is anything different for you now because you studied in the program? For example, is it easier to understand people you speak to or things you read?

5. What has been the best thing for you about studying this year?

6. What would you tell a friend who wanted to study in the program?

7. Please write anything else you would like to add about your experience in the program.

learners' responses

Learners responses were overwhelmingly positive, citing increased gains in self confidence, progress with literacy and appreciation of the attention and assistance provided by tutors.

- It made me learn a lot. I always got someone to help me.
- I liked to work with the tutor, the tutor helps learn and understand the word I don't even know.
- They care/listen, It gives me more knowledge.
- I proved to myself I could make it.
- I can read better. Not a lot better, but better than before.
- I wasn't sure at first, but now I can see I can do the work.
- I write poems and music.
- It helped me overcome problems with reading and math.
- I'm much happier, I can read and understand. I surprise myself that I can read a little bit.
- It was useful for me to speak with people. I liked it because there were few people. The tutor is very special. I;d like to spend more hours at class.
- I have more confidence, I enjoyed the learning process.

tutors' responses

Tutors, too, responded positively to their experiences. Along the way, tutors had expressed doubts, and voiced concerns about the progress they felt they were making with their learners. Some felt that they had spent too much time on very elaborate lesson plans -- spending hours in the library looking for materials that ended up being not very useful. During a mid-year evaluation, tutors wrote:

- I am working with Polish and Cape Verdean immigrants. Most, but not all, are close to my age; most, but not all, are middle class. They differ from me primarily in the kind of work they are able to do, and in their ability to extract from and enjoy the more aesthetic or creative aspects of our culture.

All the learners I have are intelligent and literate. They seem to possess a large amount of good will and are fortunate in having some friends or family members who have been in this country for a long time. While the learners appear anxious to be able to participate in the culture around them and , in some instances, to improve their economic standing, they are also inclined to homesickness, fatigue and discouragement. Using humor and food helps reduce resentment and these feelings of despair.

I enjoy tutoring and the challenge of finding ways to create a rapport despite the language barriers. I particularly like devising materials to use in the class. So far I have found discussions centered around photographs and pictures to be the most helpful in working with the people who speak very little English. The pictures also provide the necessary focus and bridge when there is a wide gap in the learners' language skills.

There are many questions I have asked myself: how best to deal with the troublesome range of language skills, how not to bore some or lose others, what to do when they speak Polish among themselves, what about a person who is tired or one who feels uncomfortable with personal conversations, what to do when the school shuts down, what advice to give or not to give when practical problems are raised, and how to provide encouragement when it is necessary but the usual words of reassurance cannot be understood. -- *Freda MacLeod, Pawtucket ESL/Literacy tutor*

- Training tutors to work in holistic learning and classroom situations is different. The learners are structured to do certain things from past learning experience.

The training itself is something I believe in. I think non traditional education is good for some people.

I'd like better clarification of tutor's role relating to learners and teacher.
-- *Howard Coleman, Cranston ABE Tutor*

- It would be helpful to be given some idea of how much preparation is reasonable for each training session. I felt compelled to spend a perhaps excessive amount of time drawing up plans and materials for each session. I would spend hours preparing something I would use for only a few minutes.

I found the confusion difficult -- it's hard to prepare when your group is mismatched or when you don't know from time to time what your group will be. Once they settled down to the same 5 people, I found preparing much easier.

There is some merit to using exercises in the workbooks. For the first 4 or 5 weeks I didn't use them at all, but I now think that using them for a few minutes each class is helpful. I'd use prepared materials easier as a way to get the shyer one to speak. I realized that some people needed specific things to read or do to speak out.

I'd have liked more direction/expertise. I would have like to know such things as what are the most vital words or principles of sentence formation to learn as a basis for learning English. I would like to know how to spot and explain certain central problems in pronunciation and grammar. I also wanted to know more strategies for working with people at the level my group was on, and also what expectations are realistic.

-- *Cranston ABE Tutor*

- It takes a month of experimenting before becoming comfortable. Use available materials until you're comfortable. Focus training on what volunteers can expect to encounter in class, such as meeting needs of students with varying skills. -- *Tutor*

At the end of the year, tutors wrote:

• I have learned to care about people who have a different skin color. This has been a big step for me. There people are very grateful and express their gratitude. My students were very eager to learn.

-- Pawtucket ESL/Literacy Tutor

• I have learned that a genuine bond develops between an ESL tutor and the ESL learners. Particularly with a group of beginners, learning is a real dialogue. It is clearly counter-productive to lecture a group of people who cannot understand what you are saying and, therefore, I have found that any factual or emotional exchange requires a concerted effort on both the tutor's and the learner's part. Both have to seek to understand the other person sufficiently to piece together what the other one is hearing, feeling or saying.

I have also realized that I learn as much from them as they go from me. In order to share my culture effectively, I gain an awareness of theirs.

I think I have also learned the perhaps obvious fact that for an immigrant acquiring a new language is a major shock. It takes for the tutor certain compassion towards the painful questions of identity and homesickness that arise.

I have been surprised to see how "irregular" a mastery of a new language is. I have seen regularly that the interest in the subject matter greatly informs the rate at which someone learns. I have also seen how tenuous the grasp on a new language can be -- fatigue and stress seem to cause an almost complete state of forgetfulness.

The lows of the semester were the first few weeks when the group was forming. There was much coming and going at first and it was very difficult preparing for class without knowing who was going to be there. The other low was the end of the funding at the Pawtucket school. Wondering whether the group was going to continue - and where it would meet.

The highs derive from coming up with a creative idea that happens to work. Most particularly the high derive from the warmth and affection with which one's efforts are sometimes met; when through mutual struggling the tutor and learners manage to break through the culture and language barrier to achieve a moment of human understanding.

-- Pawtucket ESL/Literacy Tutor

last words

As is evident from tutors' mid-year and end of the year remarks, they learned a great deal about the learning process and about the students with whom they worked. Many of their suggestions about specific points will be addressed in future training workshops. Other concerns -- such as finding ways to know if learners are making progress, are enjoying the sessions -- are ongoing, and will continue to be topics in both formal workshops and informal discussion sessions. Learning is an ongoing process, and staffs of the Adult Academy and other adult education organizations that support tutors' work are available to tutors to talk about these and other related issues.

Should learners come to you with problems pertaining to issues beyond school -- such as a need for legal advice, welfare information, health or mental health issues -- your task is not to solve the problems for the learners. The Adult Academy and other sponsoring agencies can help you make referrals for the learners. You can find out which community agencies might be helpful for a particular problem. Please contact the Academy or the agency running the classes at which you tutor for more information on community resources.

Finally, although you might not hear it as often as you should, your work is greatly appreciated by learners, by the agencies sponsoring classes, and by the teachers you assist. Without your effort and dedication, adult literacy education in Rhode Island would be in an even greater state of crisis than it now is. Funds are low, teachers are overworked, learners have many obstacles to face. What bonds us together is our belief in the learners, and in their abilities to acquire and use literacy in the ways and for the purposes they have chosen. We thank you for your effort, and we depend on your continued commitment.